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Congress derails India's coalition

Suzanne Goldenberg
in New Delhi

INDIA'S president, Shankar Dayal Sharma, sounded the death knell of H D Deve Gowda's government this week when he gave the prime minister 11 days to show that his shaky coalition can still command a majority in parliament despite its betrayal by the Congress party at the weekend.

Sitaram Kesri, the octogenarian Congress leader, staked his party's claim to govern on Sunday by withdrawing support from the ruling coalition government — a move that surprised even his own followers.

The timing of his announcement — coinciding with the first official talks in three years between Indian and Pakistani bureaucrats — could not have been more dramatic. It threatens to derail the passage of the budget introduced on February 28, and to sow political confusion.

The president's decision, delivered in a one-line communiqué on Monday, was aimed at containing the political free-for-all that is bound to follow Congress's withdrawal of support for the 13-party coalition. Congress was not in the alliance, though its support was vital.

Few now expect — or want — fresh elections. Mr Gowda's government was installed barely nine months ago, after weeks of behind-the-scenes political machinations. The prospect of more of the same before the confidence vote on April 11 has caused widespread disgust among Indians, who were in any event greatly disenchanted with their elected leaders.

"The efforts of the United Front government headed by H D Deve Gowda are determined to marginalise Congress and to allow the urgent national issues to take a back seat," Mr Kesri said in a letter to the president. "The law and order situation . . . has completely collapsed."

But his reasons for withdrawing support — lawlessness in Uttar Pradesh state, rising prices and unemployment, Hindu-Muslim tensions, and a growing drift in the nine-month-old government — lack conviction.

Mr Kesri took over as party leader in September, displacing the former prime minister P V Narasimha Rao, who is to stand trial for corruption.

It is only the third time Congress has been out of power since it led India to independence. The party, which is beset by corruption scandals, brought down governments in 1979 and 1991 by withdrawing its support.

"Looking ahead, as yet another shameful political act unfolds in the coming week, is a depressing thought," the Indian Express said in a front page editorial. Like other newspaper leader comments, it was scathing about Mr Kesri, who told the president he was pulling the plug on the Gowda government before informing his party colleagues.

"The time and manner in which it has been done, with a landmark budget awaiting parliamentary approval and the Pakistan foreign secretary in the capital, is shocking and would further strengthen the anti-politician and, sadly, even anti-system [anti-democratic] mood in a country held to ransom by politicians bankrupt of ideas or ideology."

The resulting confusion has already taken its toll. The foreign minister, I K Gujral, accused Mr Kesri of sabotaging the first official talks for three years between Pakistan and India.



One of the injured is carried away after the attack on a rally in Phnom Penh PHOTO: DARREN WHITESIDE

Cambodian leader survives grenade attack

Nick Cumming-Bruce
in Phnom Penh

CAMBODIA'S experiment with democracy suffered a blow on Sunday when grenades were thrown into a demonstration headed by the opposition leader Sam Rainsy outside the national assembly, killing at least 16 people and injuring more than 150.

Four grenades exploded in the crowd attending an officially approved demonstration to protest against corruption and political interference in the judiciary.

The worst act of political violence since the UN-sponsored elections in 1993 left dead, dying and injured strewn outside parliament in pools of blood, broken glass and the debris of broken placards. Mr Rainsy escaped unhurt after a bodyguard pushed him to the ground. The bodyguard himself was killed.

The authorities have set in motion what is already being seen as a cover-up investigation. The second prime minister, Hun Sen, agreed on Monday to a proposal by the first prime minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, that it should be conducted jointly by their respective parties, the royalist Funcinpec and the Cambodian People's Party.

The decision not to leave the investigation to the police, widely seen as dominated by the CPP, is encouraging, a human rights worker commented. But there is little expectation that the investigation will lead to a credible result, in a country where a grenade attack on members of another opposition party 18 months ago remains unsolved.

Mr Rainsy said that he had no illusions whatever about the result of the investigation. "Any serious investigation would lead back to Mr Hun Sen himself; so how can you expect a proper resolution?"

Western observers are convinced that the attack was intended to assassinate Mr Rainsy. They point to the curious absence of police and the proximity to the demonstration of Mr Hun Sen's private security staff, who allowed one man identified as a grenade thrower to escape, but blocked attempts to pursue him.

Tories in turmoil as split over Hamilton widens

Ewen MacAskill

DEEP divisions have opened up in the heart of the British Tory election machine over how to scotch the Neil Hamilton cash-for-questions affair after rightwing Conservative MPs blocked a plan by John Major and Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative party chairman, to deal decisively with the MP for Tatton.

Mr Major had to settle for a fudge, sending out a letter on Monday warning Tory constituency associations they were taking a risk if they continued to back MPs under suspicion. He said that Mr Hamilton and other Tory MPs would lose the whip if criticised in Sir Gordon Downey's report on cash for questions. But he was careful neither to back nor to disown Mr Hamilton and the other MPs being investigated.

Reflecting the panic at Conservative Central Office over its campaign being overshadowed by the allegations, Mr Major said: "Unsubstantiated allegations, still under consideration against a handful of individuals, should not cheat the electorate of the debate about which party is best suited to form the government for the next five years."

Mr Mawhinney and Mr Major, according to a Tory source, had planned a press conference to make a clean break with Mr Hamilton.

But this was dropped after protests from the No Turning Back group, the 20-strong clutch of MPs fiercely loyal to Baroness Thatcher, which includes Mr Hamilton and ministers such as Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary.

The internal battle has been reflected in the muddled response of Central Office last weekend. On Saturday, it briefed journalists that Mr Major wanted Mr Hamilton out. On Sunday this remained the line, but, following the intervention of the right wing, the message on Monday was that the party was backing off Mr Hamilton. At least one MP expressed "bewilderment" at the sudden changes.

There was even more bewilderment when Mr Major came up with yet another version late on Monday, aimed at bringing an end to the controversy. In a letter to all Conservative constituency chairmen, Mr Major denied accusations that he had prorogued Parliament early to defer publication of the Downey report.

He also rejected the charge that he had been indecisive in failing to force the Tatton constituency party to drop Mr Hamilton. "Under our Conservative party constitution, the selection of a candidate is the responsibility of the association, the decision to contest the seat is for the candidate," he said.

He added that the Downey report after the general election "may exonerate members from all, or most, serious criticisms. If so, all well and good". But if it is "unfavourable, the Conservative party will put the interest of Parliament and its reputation above all other matters".

● Friends of Sir Michael Hirst, who resigned as the Scottish Conservative party chairman at the weekend after admitting to "past indiscretions" in his private life, claimed that party officials had falsely told him a newspaper dossier detailing his private life was about to be published and he should resign.

"There was no dossier and no story. Without the resignation statement by Hirst the newspapers would have had nothing to write about — he was duped," one source said.

Floundering in sleaze, page 10
Comment, page 12

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF76	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 460	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Bengal famine: a war crime the world forgot

UNCOVERING the truth about the Wehrmacht taking part in major crimes during the last war is certainly welcome (What did you do in the war, Vater? March 23). Nevertheless historians' concerns with digging out the facts of a shameful past are often too selective. While there is no reason to minimise the importance of the exhibition of The War of Annihilation, one would hope that one day some historian (British or Indian) would write the definitive chapter of the British Raj on the Bengal famine of 1943.

Several million Indians died at the same time as the ovens of Auschwitz were running at full capacity. All the Indian leaders (except those of the Muslim League and the Communist Party) had been jailed and were thus prevented from providing relief. The censorship and the martial law that the British government had clamped on the country made it possible that no visual documents exist to testify to that genocide.

My students and university colleagues in Canada find it hard to believe that Winston Churchill denied the Red Cross the authority and the means to provide humanitarian aid in accepting and distributing the rice offered by the Japanese, who had by then occupied Burma.

At Yalta, Churchill showed more concern for the Germans who were to be expelled from the western provinces of Poland than for the millions of Indians he had deliberately allowed to die.

No member of the British administration has ever expressed a word of regret over this human disaster. In 1945, when a reporter asked Mahatma Gandhi what he thought if the forthcoming Tokyo and Nuremberg trials, he replied, "Why is Churchill not being tried for crimes against humanity?" Yet two years later the Indians had the elegance to ask Lord Mountbatten to stay on for one more year as the governor-general of the country. It was Hindu humanism that enabled the British to leave the Raj like gentlemen.

The history of the colonies, as overseas extensions of the metropole, is coterminous with the history of Great Britain. A dispassionate, definitive history of the man-made famines within the British Empire still waits to be written — even though the word "genocide" did not belong to the lexicon of the imperial administrators.

Dad Prithipaul,
Edmonton, Canada

IT WAS with some surprise that I yet again came across that hoary old chestnut, the alleged ignorance in Central Europe of German wartime atrocities.

In September 1943, soon after the signing of Italy's armistice with the Allied powers, the German military authorities rounded up Italian Army Reserve officers in northeast Italy and announced their intention to transport them to concentration camps in Austria and south Germany.

My father's arrest during that swoop caused utter consternation to our whole extended family. It was a given that anyone who found themselves in German concentration camps during that time would not come out alive. As a then impressionable seven-year-old, I vividly remember the persistent talk about the mass slaughter of inmates and the reportedly common practice of using their corpses for the production of soap and lampshades (I was to learn well after the war about the mattresses).

Why do so many Germans, and so many well-meaning historians and journalists in other countries, adhere to the naive conviction that the wartime mass exterminations were so cleverly kept secret that no one was aware of them? What do they need to be convinced?

D Bressan,
Ivanhoe, Victoria, Australia

Wrong focus on drug problem

STEPHEN ROSENFELD contributes very little to our understanding of the drug problem in America or in other Western cultures (Drug War: The Enemy Within, March 16). In writing of the "drug plague", Mr Rosenfeld should remind us that tobacco and alcohol are at least 20 times more deadly than cannabis, even when rates of use of each of these three substances are taken into account.

More specifically, while reducing demand for the abuse of legal and illegal drugs is good social policy, Mr Rosenfeld's failure to move beyond the state's rhetoric of supply and demand is myopic. A more useful analysis would focus on the costs and benefits of America's 20th century experiment with the criminalisation of certain mind-active drugs — and ask questions about the economic, political and social reasons for the continuation of this regime.

(Prof) Neil Boyd,
School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada

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IF, DESPITE the fact that, as the Falco report quoted by Stephen S. Rosenfeld states, "$34 million invested in treatment reduces cocaine use as much as an expenditure of $783 million for source-country programs", the United States continues to tackle its drug problem by targeting the producers rather than the "flaws and fissures in our own society" that many think must be looked into, must not one conclude that what really bothers US policy makers is the fact that the drug business is not US-run and owned like, say, Microsoft and General Motors?

Bernardo Recamán,
Bogotá, Colombia

Czech list of grievances

I AGREE with Michael F George's opinion that his behaviour in a Czech shop spoke *very well* of his character. (Service with a growl, March 16). He portrays himself in his article *very well* as a man with an ego which is dented easily by assertive women, so much so that he has to fantasise about being extremely rude to them. His opinion of the women shop assistants also clouded his judgment of what is acceptable behaviour in a market society, particularly for an expatriate in a transitional market society.

He failed to see that using the shop's coffee grinder for goods not bought there was no different to taking his own food into a café.

Mr George also gives a false impression of the quality of food in this part of Europe. Sour milk is a key ingredient in many dishes. Generally, I find food is much tastier than the mass-produced processed products in the West. Some vegetables are somewhat tired after the long, cold winter but imported vegetables can be bought — by those who can afford them. However, the cost of basic food is high relative to the average wage and it makes no sense to increase retail prices by processing work that people can do themselves — such as washing eggs!

Shop assistants suffer long working hours, low wages and adverse working conditions. The main preoccupation in my local food shop is not service but guarding against shoplifters. Customers may not shop without a basket or trolley, but these are limited in order to curtail the number of people in the shop (who are watched by a woman sitting on a stepladder). Why? Because it is the shop assistants who pay for any shortfall in inventory!

Anaïs Nin once said that "we don't see things as they are, we see them as we are". Mr George's article says far more about him than it does about its subject matter.

Brenda Wilkinson,
Kosice, Slovakia

Jewish sense of disapproval

THE caption to the front-page photo of the Jewish girls whose friends were murdered (March 23) exposes the Guardian's editorial bias. Whenever someone in Israel is murdered he or she is described as an Israeli, never as Jewish. If, on the other hand, an Israeli does something not approved by the Guardian, they are described as Jewish. These children were killed by a Jordanian soldier because they were Jewish.

There is no connection between these murders and the housing development in Jerusalem. But the Guardian could not resist ending the caption about the Har Homa development. Since the Guardian does not approve of Har Homa it is, of course, a "new Jewish settlement". Why mention it at all? Is it that difficult to describe it as a "new Israeli settlement"?

Mark G Lazarus,
Melbourne, Australia

Nuclear swings and roundabouts

YOUR editorial (The cost of a free nuclear lunch, March 16) rightly points out that all energy production has an adverse impact. The reader then expects a quantitative comparison of the adverse impacts of the alternatives, leading to a conclusion as to which form of energy production has the least impact, and vice versa. But no; the editorial jumps to the conclusion that the nuclear power alternative should be ruled out.

Careful quantitative comparisons are needed, by competent and respected entities that are independent of any of the alternatives being compared. One such entity charged with this task is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. One conclusion emerging from this and parallel studies is that the adverse public health and environmental impacts of nuclear power are orders of magnitude less than those of the economically viable alternative fuels for generating electricity (coal, gas, oil) for the same quantity of electricity generated.

Ed Rodwell,
Los Altos, California, USA

Briefly

YOU are wrong in suggesting that the Resolution will be the first British prison ship "since the reign of Victoria" (Locals take fright at berth of monster, March 23). Between May and October 1987 the Home Office used a hastily converted car-ferry to incarcerate some 100 asylum-seekers. This ill-judged experiment ended in ignominy when, during the storm of October 16, 1987, the ferry broke free of its moorings and began to sink — with the petrified detainees on board.

Richard Dunstan,
Amnesty International, London

WOULD scientists consider it ethical and safe to clone healthy sheep for use in cattle feed? Since human beings are already tucking into genetically enhanced soya and tomatoes, the launch of Dolly mixture into the food chain would surely make little difference.

Brenda Lees,
Manchester

ROBERT LACVILLE (Listening to the voice of Aids, March 23) reports the director of Save the Children as saying that they "have delivered a condom to every staff member inside every monthly wage-packet". One condom? Every month? Gee, I wonder why that didn't work ...

Jacky Mallett,
Ottawa, Canada

HAS Nicholas Soames considered how his scandalous treatment of Gulf war veterans has affected the morale of those serving in the armed forces? Surely Britain's soldiers, sailors and airmen deserve someone better to represent their interests than this contemptible figure.

Kenneth Parkes,
Kyoto, Japan

MINISTERS and MPs caught with their fingers in the till claim they were acting in the public interest. Can we now expect that, should the Tories be returned to power in May, they will enact legislation to lower the age when children can distinguish between right and wrong to 10 and raise it for MPs to, say, 65-70?

Eamon Grant,
Birmingham

IF THERE is one thing that might be learned from the conveniently timed dissolution of Parliament, it is that, as in the United States, the date of the election should not be set by the Prime Minister, but be fixed some years in advance.

David James,
Wytham, Oxford

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Arab leaders urge boycott of Israel

Guardian Reporters

AFTER an emotional appeal by Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian president, Arab foreign ministers last weekend called for a suspension of steps towards normal relations with Israel, and a restoration of the Arab boycott, in protest at its government's decision to proceed with a Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem.

The resolution was passed unanimously at the Arab League meeting in Cairo. The meeting agreed to recommend that states close down any Israeli missions and withdraw from multilateral Middle East talks.

But Egypt and Jordan, the two states which could have the greatest impact, appeared to be exempt from action because they have signed binding peace treaties with Israel.

The ministers met as thousands of demonstrators shouting "Vengeance!" filled streets throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip last weekend to vent their anger at the Israeli construction in east Jerusalem and the death of a student shot by Israeli troops.

Israel's prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, lamented "a virtual collapse of the peace process".

Israel has condemned Arab moves to revive the economic boycott of the Jewish state, and warned that it would damage the Middle East peace process.

Mr Arafat said: "I am not asking [the Israelis] for the moon, I am asking for the honest implementation of all what has been agreed upon."

Israeli hopes of buying natural gas from the emirate of Qatar are now in jeopardy, as are its hopes of upgrading diplomatic relations with Tunisia and Morocco.

On Sunday Palestinian police largely succeeded in creating a buffer between protesters and Israeli troops, as large crowds attended the funeral of Abdullah Khalil Salah, who was killed last Saturday. He was the first victim of the latest bout of battles between West Bank youths and Israeli troops. His corpse was borne on an army stretcher with Palestinian police providing a guard of honour.

The Palestinians used slingshots to hurl rocks at the Israeli troops, who responded with rubber bullets and tear gas. Abdullah was left lying unconscious on the ground.

After the funeral, mourners stoned Israeli troops in the centre of Bethlehem, where Easter Sunday visits had been cancelled for 200 busloads of Christian tourists. The troops responded with tear gas and rubber bullets.

On Tuesday Mr Netanyahu said he was weighing the possibility of forming a national unity government to achieve a broad consensus for a final peace deal with the Palestinians. "I am definitely considering it but I have not taken any decision on the matter," he told Israeli Army Radio.

Mr Netanyahu said that Israel would have to form a "wide national front" once the final-status talks in the Oslo accords got under way, but it was unclear whether a unity government would be the answer. "The big question is whether a unity government would create such a front or break it. Would it be a government of unity or two governments," Mr Netanyahu said.

● Two Palestinians died in explosions in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday in what the Israeli army called separate suicide attacks.

A senior Palestinian security official said police were trying to identify the dead men in an attempt to "clear the ambiguities" surrounding their deaths.

Arafat quandary, page 12

Palestinians hurl stones at Israeli border police near Ramallah, in the West Bank PHOTO: ABBAS MOUMANI

Sharif seeks to boost PM's power

Phil Goodwin in Islamabad

IN A revolutionary move for politics in Pakistan, the new prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, announced on Monday that he was moving to scrap the constitutional provision that gives the president the power to dismiss prime ministers and governments.

The measure has been at the centre of Pakistan's chronic political instability since it was introduced in 1985 by General Zia-ul-Haq. Since then, every president has used it and the last four elected prime ministers have been removed before the end of their terms.

President Farooq Leghari sacked Benazir Bhutto on November 5 last year on disputed charges of corruption and misrule, and dissolved the national assembly. The resulting election on February 3 brought Mr Sharif to power in a landslide.

Mr Sharif made his announcement in a countrywide address on state-controlled television and radio.

Since he was sworn in, his relationship with Mr Leghari has been deteriorating. They are bitter political opponents. The president has been insisting on a tight grip on policies, and has persuaded Mr Sharif to appoint a number of presidential relatives and friends to key government posts.

It was clear that Mr Leghari was determined to be a key player and it was a matter of time before Mr Sharif was sacked.

In his broadcast, Mr Sharif said the president had "willingly agreed" to the constitutional changes. In effect, he had no choice. After his landslide election victory, Mr Sharif can easily command the two-thirds majority in parliament needed to force through the change.

Italy blamed for deaths at sea

Stephen Weeks in Tirana

ALBANIANS angered by the sinking of a boat carrying refugees in a collision with an Italian naval ship warned Italian members of a planned multinational security force to stay away from the southern port of Vlore.

"I warn Italian soldiers not to come to Vlore, otherwise they will be killed," said Aida, aged 35, who attended a rally of about 7,000 people in the port on Monday to mourn the dead.

Politicians and the public expressed outrage at the incident in which 83 people were drowned, and President Sali Berisha declared a national day of mourning on Tuesday.

The crowded boat, which sailed from Vlore, sank on Friday last week after an Italian corvette intercepted it in the Adriatic.

Many of the 34 survivors claimed that the warship intentionally rammed their craft, said Albania's ambassador to Italy, Pandeli Pasko. Albania's foreign minister, Arjan Starova, wrote to his Italian counterpart, Lamberto Dini, asking for an investigation.

But the Italian foreign affairs minister, Piero Fassino, said: "The responsible ones are those who made each Albanian pay a million [lire], loaded them aboard a rotten boat and sent them to collide with the navy."

Mr Starova told the parliament: "The [missing] are mostly women and children. This is a national tragedy."

The corvette was enforcing Italy's policy of turning back illegal refugees trying to flee widespread civil strife in Albania.

The anger was especially strong in Vlore, the centre of the month-long revolt against President Berisha. Many of the refugees who died came from the port.

The self-styled Committee of Public Salvation called on Italy to compensate the families of the dead and do everything possible to recover the bodies and send them home for burial.

Meanwhile the Albanian parliament has voted to approve a UN-sponsored multinational force's deployment to protect relief operations in the country.

Rome has pushed ahead with plans for a multinational force of 2,500 to protect aid to Albania. Athens said it would contribute about 700 soldiers, and Romania said it would send 400.

But diplomats in Tirana said the Italian-led force might delay sending troops to Vlore because of the town's hostility to Italy.

Rebels deal Mobutu a heavy blow

Chris McGreal in Lubumbashi, Zaire

ZAIREAN rebels delivered another major blow to the government on Monday by seizing a key garrison town ahead of peace talks scheduled to begin in South Africa this week.

The fall of Kamina, in the southern province of Shaba, is the most severe loss for President Mobutu Sese Seko's regime since rebels took the northern capital of Kisangani last month.

The government is now threatened with the total collapse of its forces in Shaba, where, even before the rebels arrived, the Zairean army was fleeing local uprisings. The region's paramilitary gendarmes have said they will defect to the insurgents.

The rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire may be seeking new victories to strengthen its hand in preliminary talks with Mr Mobutu's regime. But the alliance is playing down expectations of an early end to the war, insisting that negotiations can only be held with Mr Mobutu or his personal envoy, a condition Zaire's president has yet to agree to publicly.

Kamina is a key military and air base at the hub of a road and rail network linking Shaba's capital, Lubumbashi with the strategic diamond mining town of Mbuji-Mayi. As Kamina is midway between the two cities, it positions the rebels to take either or both at their leisure.

The loss of Kamina also cuts off the means of escape for government troops in Lubumbashi, leaving them the choice of surrender or fleeing into Angola or Zambia when the rebels finally arrive.

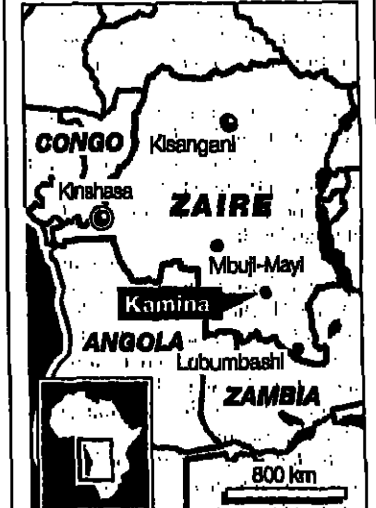
There was no resistance by the tiny force of 150 soldiers left to defend the garrison town after the bulk of government troops withdrew. In what has become the pattern for rebel assaults, infiltrators entered the city to spread word that the insurgents were on their way, to set government soldiers fleeing.

Officers commandeered a train and two small track maintenance vehicles to bolt down the railway line. Soldiers seized any vehicles to hand for their getaway, and beat up some nuns who were not quick enough to hand theirs over.

The rebels entered Kamina at 2am after walking more than 160km along the railway line from the east. A few hours later, a passenger train rolled in from the north, presenting the insurgents with a new means of moving troops across hundreds of miles of eastern Zaire.

The rebels are meeting little resistance in Shaba, and in some villages and towns the populations are turning on the old order even before the rebels arrive. Young men, some organised under the banner of regional political parties, have attacked government soldiers and village chiefs appointed by the government have resigned.

In Lubumbashi, officers of the paramilitary Katangan gendarmes — a leftover from Shaba's various secessionist struggles — are barely disguising their intent to support the rebels at the first sign of their approach. "We have arms and are ready to fight for the rebels," one commander said.



City turns up heat against Le Pen

STRASBOURG was caught up in a wave of exhilaration after a weekend of protests, organised by the city council, against the congress of the extreme rightwing National Front, *writes Peter Hillmore.*

As shopkeepers swept up broken glass last Sunday after sporadic clashes between police and protesters, last Saturday's 50,000-strong march was hailed as the city's biggest turnout since the Liberation in 1945. It was also France's largest demonstration against the growing influence of the far right.

Police used tear gas to disperse a handful of protesters who tried to break through a cordon to reach the auditorium.

They also clashed with demonstrators at a free rock concert in the city centre, firing tear gas at hundreds of young people after cars were set on fire and bottles lobbed at police. Authorities said 34 people were arrested.

As the Front conference took place, Strasbourg organised events ranging from Sunday's "citizens' breakfast" to a grand picnic on Monday. "We want to keep up the protest momentum," the mayor, Catherine Trautmann, said.

Jean-Marie Le Pen, who was re-elected without opposition as the Front's leader, condemned the march as "an attack . . . in the name of woolly-headed human rightism and professional anti-racism".

The conference set out an ambitious legislative programme, including the introduction of a preference in education, jobs and social benefits for "native-born" French. The programme would bar France from European monetary union, deport immigrants, whether legal or not, and empower citizens to pass laws by referendum.

Mr Le Pen won 15 per cent of the vote in the 1995 presidential elections, with hard-right and populist appeals against political corruption, unemployment, crime and immigrants.

The growing influence of the Front in France weighed heavily in the centre-right government's decision last week to tighten immigration laws.

Opinion polls suggest the Front is increasingly popular among the young, aged 18-24. A stall in the conference hall was doing a brisk trade in T-shirts, sweaters and baseball hats carrying the Front logo.

The party is opposed to the European Union, but Mr Le Pen proposed a "Euro-Nat" grouping of nationalist parties, after speeches by rightwing nationalist leaders from Spain, Belgium, Germany and elsewhere in Europe.

The conference, which ended on Monday, denounced a decision by the French foreign ministry to deny visas to a Serbian contingent. There was no representative from Britain, though the march was joined by protesters from Britain, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium.

On Monday four Front members were detained for posing as policemen and arresting two anti-Front protesters in Strasbourg, a state prosecutor said.

The Week

OFFICIALS in the United States believe that Hani Abdel Rahim al-Sayegh, the Saudi man arrested in Canada on suspicion of being involved in last year's Dhahran bombing that killed 19 US airmen, was in the pay of Iranian secret service.
Washington Post, page 15

INVESTIGATORS in California have identified the bodies of 39 members of a bizarre cult who committed suicide in the belief that a spaceship following Hale-Bopp comet would take them to heaven.
Washington Post, page 16

JUDGE Phillip Williams in New York ruled that an IRA attack on a police barracks in Northern Ireland was not a terrorist act. He overturned the US immigration authorities' attempt to deport an ex-IRA member who carried out the attack.

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton has chosen General Wesley Clark as commander of Nato and US forces in Europe.

NINETEEN people died and more than 80 were injured when a train was derailed near Pamplona in northern Spain, in the country's worst rail crash.

JURY selection has begun amid tight security in Denver for the trial of Gulf war veteran Timothy McVeigh, accused of blowing up a federal building in Oklahoma City in April 1995.

FOLLOWING the Dalai Lama's visit to Taiwan, the Taipei government is to allocate $180,000 for a liaison office of the Tibetan government-in-exile.

PAPUA New Guinea's government appointed John Giheno as caretaker prime minister to replace Sir Julius Chan, who stood aside amid protests at his hiring of mercenaries to quell a rebellion on Bougainville Island.

A SPANISH judge has issued an international arrest warrant for former Argentine president Leopoldo Galtieri for his alleged role in the killing of three Spaniards during Argentina's "dirty war".

A YEMEN gunman has been condemned to death by firing squad for killing a headmistress, a teacher and three children in an attack at two schools in the capital, Sana'a.

ANGOLA'S rival factions have agreed to establish a government of national unity on April 11, the UN special envoy to Angola announced.

THE US and European Union are heading for a fully-fledged meat imports dispute after failing to resolve differences over inspection rules.

Russians unite in pay anger

James Meek in Moscow

AN UNPRECEDENTED rainbow of opposition colours hung over Russia's streets and squares on Thursday last week as trade unionists rallied with communists, liberals, neo-fascists and nationalists in protest against billions of dollars in unpaid wages and pensions.

Police estimated that 1.8 million people had taken an active part in the day of protest, a mix of marches and strikes organised by the labour movement. Union sources put the figure at 4 million. The organisers had hoped for a turnout of 20 million.

Nevertheless, the sight of young workers under the blue flag of the official trade union organisation mingling with elderly communists under their red banners will send a warning to President Boris Yeltsin's government.

In a characteristic attempt to deflect blame from himself for the $9 billion in salaries and pensions owed by the state and privatised companies, Mr Yeltsin said that the demonstrators' demands were "fair", and that he had often told the government to pay its debts.

There was no sign that his words were received with any more credulity than Viktor Chernomyrdin's were when the prime minister promised last week to dish out trillions of roubles to ease the salary backlog.

In central Moscow, about 50,000 demonstrators gathered at a rally on the sloping expanse of cobbles at the southern approach to Red Square.

In bright sunshine and sub-zero temperatures, they chanted demands for Mr Yeltsin to resign, and carried placards denouncing Mr Chernomyrdin's new deputy, Anatoly Chubais, seen as the man behind the most hated economic adventures of the last five years.

● President Yeltsin gave the green light on Monday to a draft treaty on union with Belarus, despite liberals' fears that it would sign away some of his powers to a hardliner.

The draft provides for a union of independent states with closely coordinated foreign, economic and military policies.

Comment, page 12



Flat note . . . Chinese policemen look on as a steam-roller crushes pirated compact discs, cassettes and video tapes after raids on Beijing stores and markets. China has intensified its campaign against intellectual property rights under pressure from the United States PHOTOGRAPH: GOH CHAI HIN

War crimes put justice in the dock

Karen Coleman in Sarajevo

BOSNIA'S manner of conducting war crimes proceedings is raising doubts whether the accused are getting a fair hearing. Eight are under way, including two cases being heard in the absence of the accused. But the problems of justice in the divided country are long-standing.

Sretko Damjanovic, a Bosnian Serb, was convicted in 1993 of genocide and war crimes against civilians, even though two of the men he is supposed to have murdered are alive and well.

Damjanovic was a soldier in the Bosnian Serb army who strayed into enemy Muslim territory in November 1992. He was arrested and three months later convicted of murdering seven Muslims. He said he was beaten into signing a confession admitting the murders.

His lawyer found two of his supposed victims alive last autumn, and is pressing for a retrial. He said that Damjanovic's forced confession and that of another Bosnian Serb who implicated Damjanovic at the trial, put his client unfairly behind bars.

Savima Sali, from the International Human Rights Bar Association, said: "Here everybody will say they will have a fair trial, but . . . it's really questionable. Because to have a fair trial you need an independent court. Is our court system independent? I say no."

There are other problems, too. Bosnia is divided into the Bosnian Serb republic and the Muslim-Croat federation. Witnesses are often too scared to cross the boundary to appear in court, fearing arrest or intimidation. The entities have separate judicial systems, and the republic allows only lawyers from its bar association to appear in its courts. That can mean a Serb lawyer defending a Muslim accused of war crimes against Serbs.

At present seven Muslim men are being held for trial in a Bosnian Serb prison in northern Bosnia. They say they are survivors of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, who were advised by Dutch UN troops to flee through the forests when the town was on the point of falling to the Bosnian Serb army.

Last May, after living in a cave for 10 months, six of them came across American peacekeeping troops who handed them over to the Bosnian Serb police because they were carrying weapons illegally. The seventh was found later in the same forest.

They have been charged with offences ranging from illegal possession of weapons to the murder of four Serbs and a Muslim. They have had difficulty getting the right lawyers to defend them and proper access to all the evidence. One lawyer says some of them were beaten into signing false statements.

● The UN envoy for missing persons in former Yugoslavia, Manfred Nowak, has resigned in protest at the lack of progress in accounting for 25,000 still missing after the Bosnian war.

Professor sacked for daring to speak of gays

Kathy Evans in Kuwait City

A WOMAN has been dismissed from her professorial chair at Kuwait university for suggesting that homosexuality exists in the emirate.

Dr Alia Shoaib, aged 31, claimed that lesbianism was rampant among students and that she had witnessed two women making love in the university toilets. One of them was heavily veiled, a manner of dress normally associated with militant Islam.

The professor made the remarks during an informal conversation with a student, who later published them in a local magazine, al-Hadaf, which is now being sued for obscenity.

In the Middle East, homosexuality truly is the love that dare not speak its name. The issue of gay rights has never been raised and most gays are still very much in the closet. Many live in fear of being discovered, for in a number of states, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, homosexual acts between consenting adults are a capital offence.

Since her comments, Dr Shoaib has faced an investigation by the university authorities and hints, she claims, of her citizenship being withdrawn.

Dr Faiza Khorafi, the female president of Kuwait University, who was responsible for her dismissal, claims that homosexuality does not exist in Kuwait. "Ours is a Muslim society and homosexuality is against Islam," she says.

Dr Shoaib maintains that the segregation of men and women in Muslim societies has generated a repressive sexual climate. "Sexuality is locked up and is, therefore, being expressed in unorthodox forms," she said in an interview. "The gay lifestyle in the West is much more healthy. Western gays are honest about their sexuality."

Dr Shoaib read philosophy at Birmingham university. In Gulf terms she could be classified as the region's first radical feminist, arguing for such feminist ideals as a woman having control of her own body and the right to pursue her sexual identity and choose her husband.

Her controversial views have divided the establishment. The under-secretary of the education ministry, Dr Rasha Sabah, describes as "a dinosaur mentality" the belief that homosexuality does not exist in Kuwait. Dr Shoaib's dismissal has yet to be confirmed by the education minister.

One leading liberal member of parliament, Abdullah Nibarri, comments: "Homosexuality is not only prevalent in our society, it is part of our culture. Men used to go to sea for long periods, and homosexuality among men is not abhorrent, particularly for those who play the role of men."

In contrast, the information minister, Sheikh Saoud al-Nasser al-Sabah, says the professor's comments have "defamed the university and its students".

"We know there are gays in Kuwait, but we are not San Francisco. They are hidden and should remain so," the sheikh says.

University professors say the case has implications for the freedom of speech of both teachers and students at the university. One female professor was forced to submit to an investigation recently after being accused by an Islamic militant student of teaching the theories of Darwin.

Olympics shares flop

Mark Milner and Christopher Zinn in Sydney

AUSTRALIA is facing one of the biggest share flops in its history after investors cold-shouldered an innovative package aimed at financing the building of the Sydney 2000 Olympic stadium.

Final figures for the A$364.4 million ($285 million) issue, which closed on Thursday last week, have not yet been released, but the take-up is less than 50 per cent, according to one of the banks involved in the offer. Some reports suggest that little more than a third of the shares have been sold despite a longer than usual offer period and a closing date that has been delayed twice.

The issue was designed to provide the bulk of the A$463 million needed to build the 110,000-seater stadium.

Australian analysts say the offer flopped because it was too expensive. Investors were asked to stump up A$10,000 for a "gold" package, which promised a seat at every Olympic event to be staged in the stadium, stadium membership for 30 years and 1,000 shares in the stadium company.

For those prepared to pay A$33,000 (only just below a year's average income in Australia) a platinum pass offered two seats, as well as membership privileges and shares.

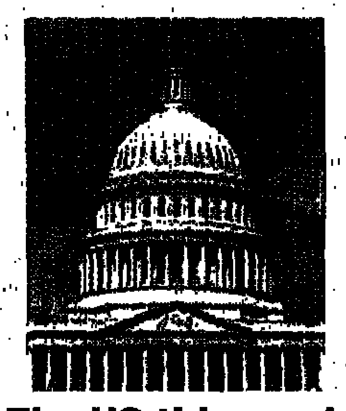
However, the issue's flop will not affect the financing programme, because the offer was underwritten (effectively guaranteed) by four big financial institutions: ANZ Securities, Macquarie Bank, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell and ABN Amro Hoare Govett.

These will have to come up with the balance of the funds that the issue was to have raised, but they will be able to offset their exposure over the coming years by selling the gold and platinum packages left.

An ABN Amro spokesman, acknowledging a less than 50 per cent take-up, said: "You have to look at the longer term. As 2000 approaches, we expect investors' interest in both the Olympics and the stadium to increase."

He pointed out that when the Dutch soccer club Ajax offered boxes and seats in its new Amsterdam stadium interest had been limited while the project was on the drawing board. But once the stadium was being built, "people were offering to pay two or three times the original price for the boxes".

China preys on American minds



The US this week

Martin Walker

THE German embassy in Washington recently began keeping track of the movements of US congressmen and senators. There was no sinister motive, more a kind of curiosity. It had noticed the large numbers planning to emulate Speaker Newt Gingrich and visit China this Easter, and thought something significant might be up. The result of its researches revealed that just over 25 per cent of all current members of Congress have been to China to see for themselves, but barely 10 per cent have visited Europe.

Although the Germans are a bit dismayed at this suggestive evidence of a great shift of American attention from Europe to Asia, it can be seen as good news for Europeans. Even though American troops are deployed in Bosnia and the enlargement of the Nato alliance is supposed to be the big foreign policy issue of the year, transatlantic relations are not a political problem in the United States, which cannot be said of its Pacific policy in general, nor of China in particular.

In the course of the past week, that fraction of the American public mind that was not obsessed by a sad band of UFO cultists committing mass suicide in San Diego was beginning to learn what the Germans had discovered. Half the US government had just visited, or were currently in, Beijing. The secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, had been there, preparing the way for last week's visit by Vice-President Al Gore, who seems to have avoided running into Gingrich and the other 30-odd cruising congressfolk.

The only news to emerge from all this Chinoiserie was that Gingrich now agrees with the Clinton administration that a policy of hopeful engagement, accompanied by lots of nagging over human rights, fair trade and a decent respect for the rights and independence of neighbours, is the only one that makes sense. Gingrich, who like most Republicans has a soft spot for plucky little Taiwan, was last year leaping to its defence against China's provocative military exercises. Accusing China of "acts of terrorism", he sounded then like a pocket Churchill of the Taiwan Strait. Not any more. Gingrich seems finally to have realised that the Taiwanese were themselves deeply embarrassed by their noisy American friends, and were rather less alarmed than might have been expected when a gigantic regional superpower claiming their territory started raining missiles down in pointed proximity to the main sea lanes into Taiwan's main port. Certainly, it did little to diminish Taiwan's massive investments in China.

"This is a society in transition, and its most painful parts are very difficult for Americans to understand. We have to find a way to work together," Gingrich told a press conference after meeting China's President Jiang Zemin. He told the Chinese leader that he would hold Congress to the traditional agreement that the US recognises Taiwan as part of China, and broadly endorsed the Clinton administration's line on "engagement".

This pleased the Chinese, and the Beijing-based US business council, a formidable group of US executives whose corporate lobbies back in Washington have worked hard to ensure that no US politician dare confront the engagement-trade-investment model. There ought to be scandal in the way greedy American corporations scurry to serve Beijing's interests; witness how the new and grand-sounding China Normalisation Initiative works out of Boeing's Washington office. Let us pass over the fat Chinese consultancy fees earned by those former secretaries of state, Dr Henry Kissinger and General Alexander Haig, and overlook the latest Clinton campaign fund-raising scandals, and simply note how well the Chinese have learnt to play by Washington's sordid rules.

Bill Clinton tried to break the corporate stranglehold on China policy during his 1992 election campaign with his pledge to "stop coddling tyrants in Beijing". Within a year, Clinton had been steered back into line, supporting the renewal of China's Most Favoured Nation trading status, and spouting that pious realpolitik word "engagement", which has now got China edging out Japan as the country with the biggest trade surplus with the US.

So it was remarkable, and rather cheering, that the irrepressible Gingrich also found the nerve to tell the assembled American businessmen that China's human rights were also

There ought to be scandal in the way US corporations scurry to serve Beijing's interests

their problem. "It is not enough to say, when they lock people up, 'Look at my profit margin'. No one in the US will support a policy of profits for prisoners . . . If Hong Kong disintegrates [once China takes over], we will all find it impossible to have open dialogue with China for two or three years. Any of you who think otherwise have zero understanding of the American system."

Two or three years sounds a dispiritingly short period for the West to mourn what would presumably be a ruthless crushing of free speech, a free press and free markets which have built the extraordinary achievement of modern Hong Kong. Even as it is swallowed, Hong Kong will finally allow the British empire to die with the claim that it has produced the most successful colonial experiment in history, or at least since that first British effort that produced the US. But two or three years it will be. That was how long the US allowed the massacre of Tiananmen Square to overshadow American foreign policy. The Japanese were back doing business within a year; the Europeans took slightly longer.



Still, Gingrich told the Chinese what he really thought about their unpleasant system. Few people can do this better than Newt, when the force is with him, and the flow was strong as he addressed a class of 100 future Chinese diplomats at the Foreign Affairs College in Beijing.

"Americans cannot remain silent about the basic lack of freedom — speech, religion, assembly, the press — in China," he began. "In the most basic sense, we are simply asking the Chinese government to enforce its own constitution," which promises that these rights will be guaranteed. The Chinese students were polite enough to restrain their guffaws, before they parroted the usual guff about China's behaviour in Hong Kong being "an internal matter" once the colony reverts to Beijing's tender mercies.

"You're right," Gingrich replied. "China has the right to eliminate all freedoms in Hong Kong. But we have the right to react to that . . . Americans are not defined by being white or Asian or black; we are defined by freedom. So if you say: 'Let's have a relationship but please don't talk about freedom', I can't speak. I have nothing to say. We do not see our insistence on freedom as an inappropriate intrusion on another country's internal affairs. We see it as the greatest gift we can offer the world."

Stirring words, and at moments such as this it is hard not to cheer him. But try replacing the word "freedom" with the word "communism", and put that same speech in the mouth of Lenin or Stalin, and it does not take much imagination to predict how Gingrich would react. But one can hardly imagine the American Foreign Service school of the day inviting Lenin or Stalin to address them, as the Chinese invited straight-talking Newt.

Of course, anybody could invite Al Gore to anything, confident that he would not upset any host, say anything out of place or use the wrong fork or chopstick. Gore was beautifully brought up by his US senator father, went to the right schools (St Alban's and Harvard) and did the right thing (went to Vietnam, a war he opposed, because daddy faced a tough re-election). He has always done the right thing.

Indeed, even though Gore in private is bright and humorous, when he feels that he is in the public eye, he freezes and loses about 40 years. The good little boy who was raised in a plush Washington hotel suite re-emerges, and the thought crosses the mind that one reason Clinton picked Gore for Veep was

Gore's staff admitted the unsavoury issue of Chinese donations to the Democrats had come up

that nobody could represent America at state funerals more solemnly than Gore. If good manners required, he could even play the corpse.

On his China trip, the good little boy went to see the terracotta soldiers of Xian, looked at them very conscientiously and said, three times, that this sight was "a wonder of the world". Then he went over to the press corps to confide another of his self-deprecatory jokes. "How do you tell Al Gore from a terracotta soldier?" he asked, and paused before giving the answer: "He's the stiff one." It is as though Gore were congenitally schizoid, with two entirely different personalities for public and private life. The only way he can reconcile the two is for the private Al to tell feeble jokes about the public Gore, a figure who could reasonably be mistaken for a robot.

After his talks with the Chinese leadership, the public Gore shifted easily into higher robotics to intone: "We made true progress in lending forward momentum to the relationship with China, while making it clear that the issues where we disagree will be pursued. Improved relations will allow us to make more progress in areas like human rights, trade and non-proliferation."

Under intense questioning, Gore's staff finally admitted that, yes, the unsavoury issue of Chinese donations to the Democratic party's election campaigns had come up. Gore had not raised it, but China's Li Peng had, in the form of a question. The context, and the inquiry, went unexplained by Gore's staff. In fact, one did not have to look far for the context. Gore and Li Peng met not only for talks, but for a formal banquet in which the two men toasted the success of Boeing and General Motors in — gosh, what a coincidence! — signing $2.3 billion in contracts just when Gore happened to be in town. If Li Peng had any sense, the question he should have asked was: "Why do you Americans think we Chinese should waste good money buying influence in your deeply corrupt political system when we can count on American corporations doing it for us, just in the hope of getting some juicy contracts?"

But given the utter fatuousness of Gore's public comments during his China trip, and given the fact that Gingrich is highly predictable, the amount of attention being paid to what they did on their Easter hols was striking. The reason is that the magazine racks and bookstalls of Washington might suggest to the casual browser that the Americans are drifting into a very cold peace with China, if not something worse. "The China Threat" blares the cover of Foreign Affairs quarterly. "The Coming Conflict with China" is the self-explanatory title of a hot new book by Ross Munro and Richard Bernstein, and the weekly political magazines are all carrying a series of alarmist cover stories about China.

One can hardly move in the think-tank world for luncheon seminars and urgent colloquiums and working breakfasts about China. Everybody seems to have got the message at once, that when a country which contains one in four members of the human race enjoys 15 years of double-digit annual growth, a new economic superpower is among us.

Americans are also waking up to the disturbing fact that not all economic superpowers are as wimpish as the Japanese and Europeans about power of a more traditional form. The Clash Of Civilisations, the book by Harvard professor Sam Huntingdon, may not have hit the bestseller lists, but its dire warning of a 21st century rivalry between the liberal white folk and the Yellow Peril — sorry, the Confucian cultures — is underpinning the formation of a new political environment.

To adapt one of Mao's subtler metaphors, Huntingdon's Kulturkampf is becoming, with stunning speed, the conceptual sea in which Washington's policy-making fish now swim. Were it not for US corporate greed and Gore's good manners, we might be heading for a new cold war across the Pacific.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Anger at failure to resolve troubling criminal cases

THE CRIMINAL Cases Review Commission (CCRC), which came into being this week and is charged with investigating alleged miscarriages of justice, will find itself starting afresh on cases that have been under review by the Home Office for more than two years.

Like most of his predecessors, the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, is slow to react to alleged miscarriages, but lawyers in some of the current cases, who had been led by Mr Howard's officials to expect a speedy resolution, expressed anger over what they see as buck-passing. The decision to hand over the cases to the CCRC was described by one lawyer as "a cynical and political stitch-up".

The family of James Hanratty, who was hanged for murder in 1962, delivered fresh evidence to the Home Office more than two and a half years ago, and their lawyers had believed he would be cleared before the CCRC came into existence. The family of Derek Bentley, hanged for murder in 1953, were also hoping for an early posthumous pardon in the light of new forensic and medical evidence.

There are at least three other major cases that the Home Office was thought to be on the point of resolving. In the so-called torso murder case, two men have already served 20 years in prison (five years more than the trial judge recommended) after being convicted on flimsy or discredited evidence. And the protestations of innocence by the "M25 Three" have attracted the support of senior Tory MPs, including the hardline Home Office minister, Ann Widdecombe.

The institution of the CCRC, which will have the power to reinvestigate and recommend cases for appeal, was widely welcomed by legal reformers precisely because of the Home Office's traditional reluctance to accept the possibility of miscarriages of justice. But it was not expected to be lumbered with old cases on which the Home Office has already been dragging its feet.

MEDICAL guidelines as to what constitutes a "permanent vegetative state" (PVS) were called into question when it was disclosed that a survivor of the Hillsborough disaster, thought to have been in a vegetative state for eight years, had become aware of his surroundings, and was communicating with his family.

Andrew Devine, now aged 30, was brain-damaged in the 1989 crush at the ground of Sheffield Wednesday, in which 95 spectators died. Though diagnosed PVS and kept alive by artificial feeding, his parents said he had first shown signs of awareness in 1994, and could now communicate by pressing a buzzer to indicate yes and no.

Another Hillsborough victim, Tony Bland, also diagnosed PVS, was allowed to die after an historic ruling by the Law Lords that, at his family's request, permitted doctors to withdraw his feeding tubes. This paved the way for other "right to die" cases involving victims of what was thought to be irreversible brain damage.

Dr Keith Andrew, the specialist who treated Andrew, said his patient's recovered awareness was a one-in-100,000 chance.

Comment, page 12

BRITISH doctors are to bid farewell to their ancient and lyrical Hippocratic Oath and sign up for a new version, drawn up by the British Medical Association, which aims to reflect modern-day realities.

The new oath, which takes account of ethical codes from around the world, will now recognise abortion and the fact that prolonging life is not always paramount. It is considered to be more in line with the Geneva Declaration, the international code of medical ethics drawn up 50 years ago.

THE century's youngest female murderer, Sharon Carr, who thought of herself as a "natural born killer", was ordered to be detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure after being found guilty of killing when she was just 12 years old.

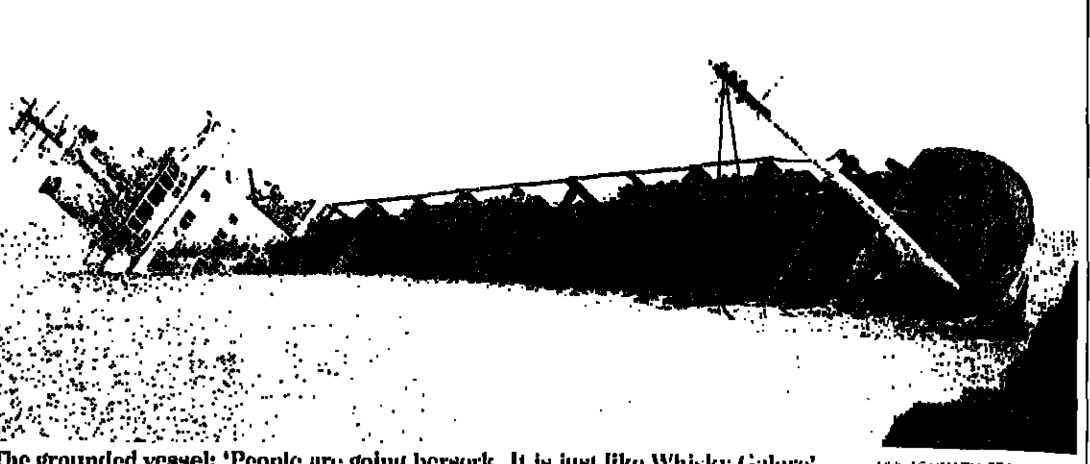
Carr, now 17, stabbed an 18-year-old hairdresser, Katie Rackliff, to death as she left a nightclub in 1992. Though not suspected at the time, Carr was later sent to a young offenders' institute for stabbing a 13-year-old schoolgirl. It was there that she boasted to staff about killing Miss Rackliff.

In a diary, she recorded how she had mutilated Miss Rackliff, and explained the sexual gratification the murder gave her. "I'm a killer," she wrote. "Killing is my business, and business is good. Now I know what I am capable of, and I will do it again."

A JUDGE came in for fierce — but unjustified — criticism for jailing two women jurors for 30 days for refusing to take part in the jury's deliberations in a £100,000 fraud trial. There will now have to be a retrial, costing around £150,000.

Judge Anura Cooray was reported, wrongly, to have found the two women — Bonnie Schot, aged 20, and Carol Barclay, aged 32 — to be in contempt for "failing" to reach a verdict. Only later did it emerge that, for personal reasons, they had refused even to take part. The two were released from prison the next day, and judges were ordered to give reporters a written explanation of their sentencing remarks when they depart from the norm.





The grounded vessel: 'People are going berserk. It is just like Whisky Galore' PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK GIBSON

Stricken ship in Scillies free-for-all

Gary Younge

SCILLY Islanders had a field day last week as they used cars, vans and prams to take what they could of the cargo that washed ashore from a container ship that had run aground.

They helped themselves to Action Man toys, computer parts, car tyres, clothes and textiles washed up on the eastern coast of the main island of St Mary's.

"People are going berserk," said Scillies maritime officer Steve Watt. "It is gradually disappearing in all directions. It is just like Whisky Galore." A container full of tobacco from the 3,000-ton Antiguan-registered Cita was being guarded by police.

Cornwall's emergency planning officer, Stan Lygo, warned anyone "who might be tempted to help themselves". He said: "They might injure themselves getting on to the rocks, and goods have been contaminated by sea water and maybe oil."

Anti-pollution equipment was being sent to the island as a precautionary measure. An estimated 100 of the vessel's 200 containers broke free, and about 15 came ashore.

Six held 18.5 tonnes each of rechargenble batteries, the lead content of which presented a potential danger to the marine environment.

Coastguards broadcast a warning to shipping about the containers, some of which were floating toward the coast. A fleet of tugs was sent to recover 200 containers from the ship that were floating between Scilly and mainland Cornwall.

Scillies councillor Clive Mumford said he was sure the authority would redouble efforts to obtain protected status for the islands in terms of shipping routes. "It is another example of how vulnerable we are."

The vessel's crew of eight, one with a broken leg, were taken off by the St Mary's lifeboat and a Royal Navy helicopter after she began listing and taking on water. One of the Polish crew, Jan Warciak, said: "We were all asleep at the time. There was a shock."

Coastguards were alerted by a 3.30am mayday message from the vessel, en route from Southampton to Belfast, when it grounded.

Scillies police sergeant Russ Mogridge said people removing items washed up were not necessarily breaking the law, as long as they later reported what they had taken to the Receiver of Wrecks.

Sgt Mogridge has mobilised the islands' two special constables, and eight more were sailing from the mainland.

A police spokesman said: "We are confident that the islanders have been displaying their usual helpfulness to the emergency services by removing property for safe keeping to avoid it being swept back into the sea at the turn of the tide."

At the weekend the Cita was declared a total wreck. Steve Watt said: "She will be left to the elements." It is expected that the stern will eventually break off and sink into deep water.



Vanishing trick . . . Islanders help themselves from the Cita

Alzheimer's drug hope

Chris Mihill

PEOPLE with Alzheimer's disease and their relatives have been asked not to besiege doctors with requests for treatment with a new drug, as that would put further pressure on health service budgets.

The drug, Aricept, is said to slow progression of the illness, although it is not known how long its benefits last. But it is being hailed as an advance in treating first symptoms of the illness.

The drug is due to be launched in Britain this month. Advance publicity on television led to a flood of calls for advice to the Alzheimer's Disease Society.

Aricept is similar to a drug called Tacrine, which received considerable publicity for its apparent ability to slow the progress of Alzheimer's in its early stages. Tacrine failed to win a licence in Britain because of fears of side-effects.

Like Tacrine, Aricept is for patients in the early stages of the illness. It is possible that around 200,000 of Britain's estimated 700,000 sufferers may be eligible.

The drug, made by the Japanese company Eisai, and distributed by Kent-based Pfizer, works by improving the performance of a brain messenger chemical called acetycholine, making those in the early stages of illness more alert.

Harry Cayton, executive director of the Alzheimer's Disease Society, cautioned that the drug was not a cure and would not help everyone, but patients and their relatives had a right to expect the treatment if their doctors thought they could benefit.

He said the drug, expected to cost about £1,000 a year, was not expensive in itself, but with so many potential users, GPs would find their drugs budgets under further strain.

"We've only seen it in clinical trials, rather than long-term use, but it appears it can delay the disease for at least six months and keep people competent for longer.

"People should not rush for supplies, because these are limited. But anyone in the early stages of Alzheimer's should find out from their GP or consultant if they would benefit."

Fate worse than death, page 24

A jumbo jet, just for one

A STOCKBROKER flying back to London after a shopping trip in New York was upgraded to first class, with 17 flight attendants to wait on him. He was the only passenger on board, *writes Kate Watson-Smyth.*

The British Airways 747 was delayed by an electrical fault and all the passengers except Stuart Pike transferred to a later flight, which actually left earlier.

"When I went on board at JFK the crew told me I could sit where I liked, so naturally it had to be first class . . . The captain let me sit on the flight deck when we landed. It was terrific."

Mr Pike, of Kingston, Surrey, said he had chosen to wait for the plane to be repaired rather than take another flight.

"[The flight] was delayed while they fixed a fault, and they transferred all of the passengers over to another flight," he said. "I wasn't in any hurry and didn't mind hanging around, so I thought I'd wait."

Ulster hit by fresh wave of violence

David Sharrock

VIOLENCE made a concerted return to Northern Ireland last weekend as loyalist paramilitaries planted a large car bomb outside a Sinn Fein office in Belfast.

They described the move, which threw into doubt their 30-month ceasefire, as a "measured" response to last week's IRA bombing at a rail station in Wilmslow, Cheshire, and the shooting of an RUC officer in south Armagh.

The planting of the 40kg bomb, much bigger than the devices loyalists occasionally favour, came after Mo Mowlam, Labour's spokeswoman on Northern Ireland, offered Sinn Fein a place in talks within three months if the IRA immediately renewed its ceasefire. Her move angered Tory MPs.

The car bomb incident swiftly followed the wounding of an RUC officer by a sniper in the south Armagh village of Forkhill and the uncovering of an IRA training camp, partly constructed underground and complete with firing range, a few miles away across the border in Monaghan.

A second massive bomb, abandoned near an army base in the North, was also discovered last weekend. The 450kg device, found on a roadside near the base at Ballykinler, Co Down, was defused by army experts. Nine bags of explosives were recovered, along with detonating equipment. Police said that it was an attempt at mass murder.

Meanwhile an investigation was under way after a 19-year-old man was shot and seriously wounded by undercover soldiers moments after an explosion at an RUC police station in Coalisland, Co Tyrone, on Wednesday of last week.

The RUC chief constable, Ronnie Flanagan, warned that Northern Ireland was in a very dangerous situation, with police and troops daily facing "real attacks with a determination to kill them".

Against this backdrop of violence, the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, spoke of a "new opportunity for peace". He described as "very encouraging" the offer from Ms Mowlam, who is expected to become Northern Ireland Secretary if Labour wins the election.

He urged Labour to begin immediate talks with Sinn Fein. But the spate of attempted attacks suggests that talk of an IRA ceasefire is groundless for the time being.

The two bombs that exploded in Wilmslow last week prompted fears that the IRA had embarked on a pre-election campaign. No one was hurt but rail services were in chaos throughout the day.

The second blast came 35 minutes after the first bomb and could have been planted to endanger the lives of the emergency staff.

A cross-party row broke out in the wake of the attack when the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, declared in a Conservative Central Office statement that voters could not trust Labour "to be tough on terrorism". He said that Tony Blair had not once voted to renew the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which provided police with necessary powers.

Mr Blair accused Mr Howard of "an extraordinary act of attempted opportunism" and demanded an explanation. He said: "It seems to me that making political capital out of a terrorist attack is an extremely irresponsible way for a Home Secretary to act."

Anger over care ruling

David Brindle

THE Conservative party's plans to help people protect their homes from being sold to pay for residential or nursing care in old age were last week plunged into doubt by a High Court judgment that the state need not honour its side of the bargain.

Mr Justice Jowett ruled that local authorities could ignore the national rules on community care funding if they were short of money.

The decision, in favour of Sefton council on Merseyside, was the second ruling in a week to quality people's rights to social care, the House of Lords having earlier held that local authorities could take account of available resources in deciding whether to withhold or withdraw care services in people's homes.

Welfare groups said the structure of long-term care had been wholly undermined. They called on the main political parties to accept the need to go back to the drawing board.

Tessa Harding, head of planning and development at Help the Aged, which helped bring the Sefton case, said the ruling "takes us straight back to the Poor Law". It rendered worthless any government assurances to old people.

"The phrase 'duty to care' no longer has a meaning. This judgment delivers a frightening message for pensioners today — and offers a grim prospect for those of us yet to retire," Ms Harding said.

Sefton, which includes the popular retirement town of Southport, has been openly flouting the community care rules, which dictate that a local authority should help towards the care home costs of any person with assets worth less than £16,000. Once assets fall below £10,000, the authority is supposed to meet the whole cost, typically from £250 to £350 a week.

Sefton, which claims it is underfunded by government, has said it cannot meet these commitments and has been applying its own thresholds. According to Help the Aged, these have meant no help for people until their assets fall below £1,500 — sufficient to pay for their funeral.

● Kent County Council has dropped plans to privatise its entire domiciliary care service, helping elderly and disabled people in their own homes, after its staff accepted changes saving up to £3 million a year.

Tory masterplan flounders in sleaze

The Conservatives began with determination. Yet their campaign has been dogged by disasters, writes **Martin Kettle**



ON MARCH 15, John Major stood backstage at the Forum Theatre in Bath and clinked champagne glasses with the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, and the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell.

The Prime Minister was at his most confident and relaxed. He had just come off the platform after delivering an upbeat message about a Tory-led "people's Britain" to the annual Conservative central council, the Tories' most important gathering after the party conference.

As they sipped champagne, Mr Major and his ministers — both of whom are candidates for his job — knew the Sunday papers had been briefed that this speech was to be the start of one man's attempt to prove the entire political establishment wrong.

They knew that the waiting was over, and that the election would be on May 1.

Now, however, only weeks after that confident performance in Bath, the Conservatives have repeatedly lost the political initiative, seen two MPs, Allan Stewart and Tim Smith, forced into premature retirement and two others, Neil Hamilton and Piers Merchant — alleged to have had an affair with a 17-year-old nightclub hostess — placed under mounting pressure to do likewise. This has allowed Labour to fight a largely untroubled defence of the biggest poll lead any opposition has ever enjoyed at this stage of an election campaign.

The Tory plan was disarmingly simple. A six-week campaign would give them their best chance of cutting into Labour's seemingly impregnable lead of between 18 and 25 points.

Faced with a real election rather than an opinion poll, they argued, voters would soon begin to rally to the Tories. A long campaign, it was said, would "smoke Blair out".

That was the plan. But it never happened. Instead, the campaign has been dogged by a succession of self-inflicted embarrassments. The chance to get the message over has been squandered by a party that seems unwilling and incapable of acting together.

The momentum of March 17, the day Mr Major called the general election for May 1, collapsed that same night when Rupert Murdoch abandoned the Conservatives and pledged the Sun instead to Tony Blair, and it has continued to go wrong ever since.

Mr Major's campaign has been successively derailed by an undisciplined party and by his own inability to impose his views. The failure to persuade Piers Merchant, MP for Beckenham, to resign is the latest example, guaranteeing that these domestic crises continue to deflect what ought otherwise to be a strong economic message to voters.

Mr Major claimed last week that the Tories are presiding over "a turbo economy", but each time the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, tries to promote Tory economic successes, the cause is knocked back by the sheer unbiddability of the party.

There have been other misjudgments too, such as the constant relaunches of lack-lustre poster campaigns. And the Major campaign has had to face embarrassing moments on the road, such as the occasion last week when he found himself wandering dangerously near to a sign advertising "Slee's" hardware shop in Barnstaple. Labour would never have let that happen to Tony Blair.

Mr Major first seriously lost control of the campaign on the last day in the Commons, when his anger and frustration were plain to see. Ominously for him, pro-Tory newspapers such as the Times and even the Daily Telegraph began casting doubt on his claim that his decision to prorogue Parliament so early had nothing to do with Sir Gordon Downey's cash-for-questions inquiry.

And when the Guardian published four pages of transcripts of evidence to the inquiry, Mr Major's slowness to appreciate the momentum behind the corruption allegations led to a weekend of confusion at Central Office that continues to ooze on.

The Prime Minister's anger in the Commons had been genuine, and he continued to hit out at those who accused his backbenchers. He tetchily dismissed the Guardian's evidence against Tim Smith and Neil Hamilton as "total and complete junk", he was happy for Michael Heseltine to tough it out on television, claiming that he would have *no* problems campaigning with such candidates.

Yet Mr Major had also allowed his aides to tell journalists a completely different story — that he was furious with Mr Smith and Mr Hamilton. "Major wants the sleaze MPs out," was the Express on Sunday's headline on March 23.

Which was the real voice of Mr Major? The fact that it was impossible to tell was the Conservatives' real problem. Ambivalence remained at the heart of the the Tory campaign last week, when Allan Stewart dismayed the party north of the border by quitting the safest Tory seat in Scotland over a scandal in his private life.

Two days later, Tim Smith suddenly resigned as candidate in Beaconsfield, ensuring that Labour's hiccup over union rights was forgotten and opening an eleventh-hour opportunity to some lucky seatless Tory MP to get back into the Commons for the party's third-safest seat.

The disgraced former minister and member for Beaconsfield, who confessed to taking £25,000 in used £50 notes from Harrods' owner Mohamed Al Fayed, was pressed to bow out of politics as leading figures in his own association and fellow parliamentary colleagues turned against him.

But when the newly Blairite Sun splashed Mr Merchant's misdemeanours all over its front page, it looked briefly as though a new page had been turned. Messrs Major, Heseltine and Clarke all nudged the errant MP to do the decent thing. But Mr Merchant, like Mr Hamilton 200 miles to the north in Tatton, was proving harder to shift than Tim Smith, a reminder that the regimental discipline on which Tory leaders of an earlier era could rely is as much a thing of the past as the tradition that a Tory minister should resign if his policy has failed.

The optimism of March 15 now seems a very long time ago. The message that Mr Major delivered to his troops in Bath — with its vision of a land where the rewards would go to the have-nots as well as to the haves — has made little headway.

It is a powerful message and it provided him with a brief champagne moment, but the message is not getting through and the bubbles have since gone flat.

Comment, page 12

In Brief

THE FIRST parade in Ulster's annual marching season passed off without incident despite complaints by some loyalists that members of the Apprentice Boys of Derry had given in to the IRA by agreeing not to march through a mainly Catholic section of the Lower Ormeau Road in south Belfast.

STAFF at JobCentres have been registering thousands of phantom job placements in order to enhance the Government's employment figures, investigators have been told.

AFTER half a century of military occupation, Greenham Common airfield has been sold to Newbury district council for £7 million, to be restored largely as public heathland.

LABOUR delivered a sharp warning to teachers that a Blair government will never succumb to industrial action aimed at "bullying" the party into adopting more radical policies than those it is convinced will secure victory at the election.

BRITAIN has soared seven places in the world competitiveness stakes, according to the Institute of Management Development. The UK jumped from 19th to 12th position, two places ahead of Germany.

SION JENKINS, the foster father of murdered schoolgirl Billie-Jo Jenkins, has been released from custody on £250,000 conditional bail.

SIR DAVID English, chairman of Associated Newspapers, which publishes the Daily Mail, has taken over the chairmanship of Independent Television News.

TWO Scout leaders from Kidderminster in Worcestershire were crushed to death under tons of sandstone rock as they sat around a camp fire.

DOCTORS are to review their approach to children with learning disabilities after a survey of 1,000 families found many were deeply unhappy at the way they had been treated.

KWASI MINZA, a Ghanaian musician severely disfigured in the King's Cross Underground fire almost 10 years ago, was awarded £110,427 by a High Court judge. But after he had earlier turned down a settlement of £355,000 from London Transport, legal aid had been withdrawn and he may end up having to pay LT £100,000 in legal bills.

POLICE issued fresh warnings about the "lethal playground" by railway tracks after two teenagers were killed by a 90mph express train on an urban stretch of line near Leeds.

Green campaign gets stuck in the mud

SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

THE Conservatives held a press conference on the environment last week. They talked about rivers of filth, noxious vapours in the atmosphere and piles of stinking ordure.

So, as you can see, they hardly got to talk about the environment at all. Instead, they were asked about the latest Tory sleaze.

Every time they tried to change the topic to meaningless trivia (such as whether the planet will still exist in 50 years' time) they had to be brought back to the key issue: what was a Tory MP doing with a youthful nightclub hostess who had been recruited by his local party for envelope-stuffing?

They tried — how they tried — to talk about the environment, and how the Tories were the greenest party in Europe. (Who says they are? Why, the Tories, of course.) But the topic kept returning to Mr Piers Merchant and Mr Neil Hamilton.

Poor John Gummer and Ken Clarke should have realised what was about to hit them when they bounced on to the platform at Central Office. A visual aid appeared on a screen behind them, with idyllic pictures of lush parkland, a sunlit copse and sparkling streams. "So that's where Piers Merchant did it," shouted a hack from the back.

John Gummer and Ken Clarke looked grim. Mr Gummer launched into his spiel, about cleaning our rivers and beaches, cracking down on pollution, making industry responsible for waste.

Mr Gummer said it was time to talk about cleaning up our landscape. Another hack said it was time to talk about cleaning up the Conservative party. Was it true that "a candidate accused of sleeping with a 17-year-old is expected to stand down, but an MP accused of taking cash for questions can go on as long as he maintains his innocence?"

Finally, some kindly soul asked a question about the environment. Mr Gummer answered it. Then an unkindly soul asked about Piers Merchant, again. Mr Gummer looked crosser than ever.

Mr Clarke then made an extraordinary noise, which my notes transcribe as: "Dib bid whubb durr." It turned out he wanted to appeal to our better natures, and naturally couldn't get the words out.

"Most people in this room have a serious interest in politics and government!" he said. I can't imagine whom he was confusing us with. We're lobby correspondents.

Live events thrive as TV viewing falls

Dan Glaister

THE BRITISH watch television for 3.6 hours every day, listen to music for half an hour every day, are more than twice as likely to go to a museum as a theatre, and four times more likely to go to see a play than an opera.

An intriguing portrait of the typical Briton emerged last week in the latest edition of Cultural Trends, the independent journal that brings together statistical and other information to provide an overview of the nation.

There are some surprises. While television viewing figures are slightly down for the decade from 1985, attendance at live performances is up. Almost 10 million people went to the theatre in 1994/5, compared with just over 9 million in 1986/7. Opera and ballet figures also show a rise, from 2 to 2.5 million and 2.3 to 2.9 million respectively, while contemporary dance suffered, with attendance down from 1.6 million to 1.4 million.

The music sector presents a mixed picture, although the figures were compiled before the full impact of the Britpop phenomenon could be assessed, let alone the arrival of the Spice Girls. By 1994 £1,015.7 million was spent on CDs, another £342 million on cassettes and almost £50 million on music videos. British recorded music accounted for £283.7 million in exports.

And in spite of last week's Oscars triumph, the news is not all good for the British film industry. Cinema attendances may have risen over the last decade, but most of the films that audiences are attending are US blockbusters. Only two British films recouped their costs at the UK box office in the years 1990/94.

In the case of the theatre, the report warns that financial crises are having an impact on content. "Not surprisingly, many performing arts organisations have sought to reduce their expenditure," says the report, which was edited by Sara Selwood, head of the Policy Studies Institute's Cultural Programme, the independent think tank behind the report.

"The measures they have undertaken include reviewing their management, losing staff, mounting fewer, or more modest, new productions, reducing the number of performances, cutting back on touring commitments, and closure.

"Market-led programming has led to an increase in musicals," the report adds.

While TV watching declined, the hours of terrestrial broadcasting transmitted every week grew from 471 in 1985 to 671 in 1995. If figures for satellite and cable are included, the total for a typical week in 1994 was 3,701 hours.

In the book market, consumer expenditure fell in real terms despite an increase in the number of new titles published.

Spicy start for launch of Channel 5

WHEN Britain's second terrestrial television channel was launched in 1953 the BBC notoriously reacted by burning Grace Archer alive on the radio that night, *Mark Lawson writes*. But when last Sunday's Archers Omnibus reached its end without the summoning of a hearse to Ambridge, it became clear that the launching of the fifth terrestrial channel has not instilled the same kind of fear in the opposition.

In the hours leading up to the launch, pushers of the fifth button found an announcement of two free 0500 numbers for those who experienced interference with their videos or satellite dishes.

This note of technological apology — rather than triumphalism — spoke of Channel 5's biggest initial problem. When Channel 4, in the early eighties promised a "revolution in viewing", it was merely referring to content. But with Channel 5 squeezing into ever more crowded airwaves there was a risk that the picture might revolve.

A huge re-tuning exercise had not entirely removed the fear that the switching on of the fifth channel would result in a catastrophic defrosting of the nation's freezers.

While the boffins grappled with the question of who would be able to watch, the pundits muttered about who would want to. Preceded by satellite and soon to be succeeded by digital, this fifth signal aimed at the conventional roof-top aerial came to seem like the unwanted child of British TV. At 6pm, though, it was born, strong and clear at least in southeast England.



Channel 5 shows its hands-on management style

The first sight was the Spice Girls. This was obviously opportunism, although there was a numerical excuse: popular culture's current most famous five performing for the completion of terrestrial TV's quintet of channels. This cultural punning continued with the first advert: a commercial for Chanel No 5.

The debut programmes felt weaker than Channel 4's. This is worrying as a glance at the schedules in the weeks ahead suggests that Channel 5 put most of its eggs in one basket for launch.

The promised innovations in news and late-night talk shows will be tested in the coming weeks, but if the newcomer has truly discovered any new tricks of the trade they will rapidly be learned by the old dogs. From now on — as the adrenalin gives way to the stamina of continuation — the station must begin answering the question that has dogged it from the beginning: why have they bothered?

Foetus has 'no rights'

Clare Dyer

THREE senior judges last week issued a landmark ruling upholding the right of women to refuse Caesarean sections and other obstetric intervention, even if their decision puts their unborn child at risk.

The judgment is aimed at stemming the tide of applications by doctors for court orders authorising Caesareans, and should ensure that such orders are made only when the woman lacks the mental competence to take her own decisions.

The judges were giving their reasons for refusing an appeal by a mother, aged 23, against a High Court order allowing doctors to anaesthetise her and perform a Caesarean against her will because of her baby's position in the womb. They approved the decision in her case on the ground that her fear of needles temporarily impaired her mental functioning. A court order bans identification of the parties involved.

But the judges made it clear that a woman cannot legally be made to undergo an operation against her will if she is competent to take that decision, even if the likely result is death for her or her baby, or a handicapped child.

Lady Justice Butler-Sloss, sitting with Lords Justices Saville and Ward, said the "delicate and difficult question" of how the mother's interests should be balanced against those of the unborn child did not arise if the woman was competent. The court had no jurisdiction to intervene to protect the foetus.

"If the competent mother refuses to have the medical intervention, the doctors may not lawfully do more than attempt to persuade her," the judges said.

Hapless Moby runs out of luck

MOBY, the wayward 40-ton sperm whale, died on Monday, an hour after becoming stranded on mud at Airth in the Firth of Forth, *writes Erlend Clouston*.

On Tuesday his body was moored to a rope as the authorities pondered who would act as undertaker to the 50ft corpse.

Moby ran out of luck and water around noon low tide, 12 days after he first arrived in the estuary having taken a wrong turning on his annual migration.

"We don't know why he kept going up river," said Alex Kilgour of the Deep-Sea World aquarium at North Queensferry.

"He should have been on the west coast of Britain and I believe he just wanted to keep heading west, which took him into the River Forth."

A beached whale normally dies rapidly because of the weight on its organs once it no longer has buoyancy.

Experts will now decide how to dispose of Moby. One likely solution is a discreet, dynamited disposal at sea.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Russia's problem is fatalism

THE HARDSHIPS suffered by most Russians may perversely be helping Boris Yeltsin survive. Last week's protests over wage arrears and overdue pensions show that for millions of Russians, empty pay packets and missing cheques are more important than what may have been conceded in the Helsinki summit to Bill Clinton. Mr Yeltsin has defended his tacit acceptance of Nato's expansion. What would have been achieved, he asked, if he had pounded the table with his shoe? That is not the issue: most Russians have no desire to go back to the cold war. What is significant is that the Russian press paid less attention to Helsinki than to the cabinet shake-up, which ushers in another "reform team" with another round of "new reforms".

Allegations of a surrender to US strategic interests are less important than the suspicion that large sectors of the Russian economy have been surrendered to corrupt and mafia-ridden interests. The government in Moscow has just ordered an inquiry into claims that the half-billion-dollar World Bank loan for revitalising the coal industry has been misspent. This connects directly with the complaints of Russian coal miners: they say much of the money, supposed to restructure the industry and prop up social welfare programmes for the workforce, has been diverted. Nor will a report from the chief military prosecutor come as much of a surprise: more than 6,000 cases of corruption and embezzlement were committed in the armed forces last year. Many of these arise from the desperation of military staff who themselves are paid inadequately or late and deprived of decent housing. In a related area, the government has just allocated a quarter of a billion dollars to pay the workforce in its defence industries — though it is still only half of what they are owed.

Western marketeers dispute this gloomy picture, pointing to a slowing down of inflation and an incipient economic upturn. But even if sustained, this starts from the low point to which the economy has sunk. Many Russians contrive to get by through operating in the informal economy, which does not, by definition, feature in the formal statistics. Yet this is still a sad plight for one of the world's greatest industrialised countries. And the emergence of a new élite with substantial purchasing power is irrelevant to the huge majority who cannot afford the Western goodies in the shops. Even last week's demonstrations by the unpaid lacked vigour: the turnout was well below the 20 million forecast by trade union organisers. This is partly because people hope against hope that the new cabinet will achieve something. It is also because people have become fatalistic. Their mood is less threatening to Mr Yeltsin, but in the long run must be more harmful to Russia's future.

A dishonourable member departs

A WEAK, dishonest man departed from British public life last week. He left with ill grace and to a deafening silence from the men who had supported his right to fight the coming election as a Conservative candidate: specifically, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. Had he not resigned, and had not the Guardian published extracts from his admissions to Sir Gordon Downey's inquiry, a fraud would have been perpetrated on the electorate on polling day. His departure is thus cause for modest celebration.

But the story of Tim Smith's last eight years as a Tory MP is also a dismal lesson in the denials and evasions at the heart of the last government and of the privileges Parliament claims for itself. Here is a man who should have left public life eight years ago, after confessing his dishonesty to the Government's chief whip in 1989 (prompted by the knowledge that Tiny Rowland had discovered his acceptance of bribes and might have exposed him).

The chief whip seems to have been remarkably unimpressed by Mr Smith's confession. He seems not to have questioned him about any specifics. He did not inform any law officers about an apparent act of an MP accepting bribes. He did not inform the Privileges Committee. He seems to have kept no note of the encounter. Such, in 1989, were the concerns for standards in public life among those at the centre of the Conservative government.

His case is not one (as the Tory party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, would have us believe) of a rogue MP about whom his colleagues were in the dark; his case is of a politician whose greedy, dishonest behaviour was well known and who still continued to prosper. That is the damning charge and it is not something Mr Major should be able to shrug off.

The announcement of Mr Smith's "honourable" departure was notable for two remarks. The first was his assertion that he had been motivated only by the interests of his constituents and country. He is surely forgetting the interests of Mr Al Fayed, which he represented so resolutely as long as the envelopes with £50 notes kept coming in. The second was his attempt to blame the Guardian for hounding him out in breach of parliamentary privilege. It is time Parliament looked to its privileges.

Parliamentary privilege means MPs enjoy effective immunity from prosecution for dishonesty in relation to their work. Privilege means they can set up their own tribunal to judge themselves. Privilege means they can suspend that tribunal if the business of getting themselves elected intervenes. Privilege means they can appoint to that tribunal MPs who have announced their verdict before considering the evidence. Privilege means MPs can now — see Neil Hamilton — waive their privileges when it suits them. Privilege means MPs can also — see Tim Smith — refuse to waive their privileges when it does not suit them, even if that act becomes an impediment to the courts' attempt at seeking truth and justice. Privilege means Parliament can insist on no one writing about any of that if MPs so dictate. To breach such a muddled, self-serving set of conventions when they are pleaded to conceal iniquity may be thought a duty; for Mr Smith to blame "a breach of privilege" for his downfall is contemptible.

What, now, for Mr Hamilton and the other admitted recipients of undeclared amounts of money? Mr Hamilton has told his local paper that Mr Major dismissed him as a minister in October 1994: no "honourable" resignation for him. If Mr Major thought he was an unacceptable figure to serve as a minister he must now say why he considers him an acceptable figure to serve as an MP.

This is an issue that, unless resolved, will justifiably continue to dog the Prime Minister until polling day. The simplest way out would, even now, be for him simply to publish the "cash-for-questions" report of the parliamentary commissioner for standards, Sir Gordon Downey. Voters in the remaining nine constituencies where a doubt is still cast over their Conservative candidate would thus be able to vote in the light, and not in the dark.

Death and a moral minefield

ALL CAMPAIGNS have their reverses. Right-to-die campaigners suffered two last week. First was the decision by the Australian Parliament to overturn the Northern Territory's euthanasia law, introduced only nine months ago. Then the other Hillsborough victim who suffered severe brain damage but whose parents, unlike Tony Bland's, refused to allow artificial feeding to be withdrawn, has, eight years later, developed an unspecified movement that can signal yes or no.

Euthanasia is an emotive subject, but the challenge clinicians face has been made even more daunting by research showing serious misdiagnosis in some cases of PVS (permanent vegetative state) and the heroic efforts patients such as Jean-Dominique Bauby, the editor of Elle magazine, who dictated a 130-page book using only his left eyelid. Some clarifications are necessary: Mr Bauby was suffering from a stroke, not PVS. Tony Bland was in a much more severe state, with no cortical function, than the other Hillsborough victim receiving artificial feeding. The Law Lords, who ruled on Bland, at no point authorised withdrawal of treatment from all PVS patients.

Yet the Law Lords were right to declare that the issue was too controversial to be developed by case law. Opponents of euthanasia have a right to be heard but cannot impose their views on everyone else. Most of the public supports the idea of accelerating death for terminally ill people in extreme pain. The medical profession is divided, but surveys show a third of doctors admitting they concede to requests for active euthanasia. What is needed is a national commission to clarify the moral and clinical issues.

Arafat in a quandary as his dream fades

David Hirst in Gaza

LIKE other Middle Eastern autocrats, whom he increasingly resembles, Yasser Arafat seems to think that nothing inspires and uplifts his people more than outsize portraits of his beaming, benevolent self.

But the floodlit addition to them that recently went up in Muntaza Square bears an embarrassing quotation from the Palestinian leader: "Only with you, Oh Jerusalem, will my dream be complete."

Mr Arafat's "dream" is eventually to set up a Palestinian state in the occupied territories, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That may look improbable now. Indeed, each stage of the peace process may appear to make it less, not more, attainable. But that, he contends, is appearance only. Natural justice, the tide of history, the dynamics of the process, will make it come true in the end.

So far, he has persuaded his people of this — or he behaves as if he has. In truth, fewer and fewer believe it, because with each step in the so-called interim period of the Middle East peace formula reached in Oslo, he gives more away. By the time it comes to the "final status" issues, of which Jerusalem is chief, there will be precious little left to negotiate.

"He boasted about Hebron," said Haidar Abdul Shafi, Gaza's elder statesman. "To my mind it was an unmitigated disaster. Now we have Har Homa."

The point about Har Homa is that, if Israel's latest building project in East Jerusalem goes through, it will shatter the myth of the attainability of Mr Arafat's dream, shattering it in the most dramatic possible way — in the Holy City itself.

In its timing, symbolism and emotional impact, this apartment complex is not just another settlement, not even just another Jewish neighbourhood in Mr Arafat's future capital. Just as the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, has made it into an existential question on which the destiny of Zionism hinges, so Palestinians feel that if they give way on this, they lose Jerusalem itself.

It would be a terrible badge of shame for Mr Arafat. Abdullah Hourani, a senior Palestine Liberation Organisation official, said: "In the past, it was others who sold out on our behalf, or pushed us into doing so ourselves. Jerusalem is a crisis for everyone, especially King Hussein [of Jordan] and President Mubarak [of Egypt], but the real crisis is Arafat's. He himself would be burying the dream, signing away our birthright with his own hands. I don't believe he can do it."

Mr Arafat is still Mr Palestine, the sole leader, with a charisma and historical legitimacy all his own. But he is losing them fast. That is not only because of his conduct of the peace process, but because he is proving grievously wanting in that other great and complementary task, the building of his state-in-the-making.

The perfidious "Zionist foe" is no longer seen as the only source of Palestinian woes. Economic misery, corruption, abuse of human rights, the creation of a vast apparatus of repression — all flow wholly or in part from his Palestinian Authority.

Nor, in these conditions, is it only the Islamist Hamas movement that opposes him. To be sure, it is his most potent, and clever, adversary. It has the wit to show its hand — as with last month's Tel Aviv suicide bombing — only when it knows the tide of public emotion is shifting in its favour, which it does when the Israelis humiliate Mr Arafat and play havoc with the demeaning strategy for which he stands.

More significant, now, are stirrings of discontent within Fatah, Mr Arafat's own organisation. Alarmed at his endless concessions, and fearful Hamas will steal the "street" from them, some Fatah militants urge a return to the "armed struggle" on which Mr Arafat once exclusively relied. Even some of his top officials make no bones about it: they would be deeply shocked if he backed down once again, resuming the peace process as if nothing had happened.

As head of preventive security, and chief co-ordinator with Israeli intelligence, Mohammed Dahlan is the second most powerful man in Gaza. But not so long ago he was leading the Fatah Hawks in the intifada.

When I asked him if he would act on Israel's latest demand for a crackdown on Hamas, he was contemptuous. "Could I do that even as I tear up Oslo itself? My own mother would disown me. So what do you think the people would think? As it is, some already say I am . . .", he searched for the word, "unpatriotic."

YASSER ARAFAT still relies on diplomacy to overcome the gravest crisis the peace process has faced. He has hopes of the time-worn emergency mechanisms of Oslo, chief of which is that whenever the two parties reach total deadlock, the US intervenes as "honest broker". Yet for Mr Arafat, the US is not an impartial arbiter. Instead of redressing the balance in favour of the weaker party, the Palestinians, it tends to furnish yet more muscle to the stronger, Israel. But since the peace process, and probably Mr Arafat's survival, depends on US favour, he has little choice but to acquiesce.

It looks as if the US thinks it can count on his pliancy yet again. Sceptical at first about the "green light" Mr Arafat is supposed to have given the Hamas terrorists before the Tel Aviv café bombing, Washington has rallied to the Israeli line. From Mr Arafat, it now wants an unequivocal "red light". What it wants from Mr Netanyahu, it has yet to say.

Sooner or later will come a crisis in which Mr Arafat can bend no further, when he must break or resist. Some think this defining crisis is already here, others that Mr Arafat will somehow defer it. But the people are already venturing down the path on which he may eventually gamble his all. The stone-throwers of Hebron, Ramallah and Bir Zeit presage a new intifada, the suicide bomber of Tel Aviv a new reign of Islamist terror.

Mr Arafat cannot go on switching "spontaneous" popular outrage on and off to suit his diplomatic convenience. He no longer commands enough respect. Without a resolution of this crisis, the protests, led partly by Fatah militants, will almost certainly spread. Amid growing insurrection, Hamas will not need a green light to make its own deadly contributions.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
April 6 1997

Le Monde

Swiss banks strive for a clean image

Jean-Claude Buhrer in Bern on Switzerland's efforts to keep a distance from Mobutu and rumours of his hoarded millions

AFTER getting its fingers burnt by the Ferdinand Marcos affair and, even more, by the present controversy about what happened to assets deposited in Swiss banks by the victims of Nazism, the Bern government is keen to avoid further unpleasant surprises that may arise from the actual or imagined fortune that is rumoured to have been stashed away in Switzerland by President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire.

The Swiss Bankers' Association (SBA), concerned as it is about the degree to which Switzerland's image as a financial centre has been dented, is also watching developments closely. It is prepared to co-operate with the authorities in the event of Mobutu's assets being frozen.

As Mobutu's grip on power becomes increasingly shaky, there is intense speculation about the size of the Zairean president's personal fortune. Estimates range from $100 million to more than $15 billion.

Opinions also vary as to just how much of his fortune Mobutu has deposited in Switzerland. The foreign ministry jurist in charge of the case says some people claim Mobutu still has a great deal of money in Switzerland, while others say almost none of it is left.

An SBA spokesman is even more cautious: "We know nothing about the size of the funds concerned. Indeed we have no indication that there are any at all. We recognise that any well-run financial centre is exposed to this kind of risk.

"But it should be remembered that there were similar rumours going round when the communist regime in Romania fell, and that in the end it turned out Ceausescu had no account with any Swiss bank."

The most visible aspect of Mobutu's fortune in Switzerland is his luxury 30-room residence in Savigny, above Lausanne, which is thought to be worth $5.5 million. The mansion was built in the seventies, at a time when Zaire's strong man was made to feel welcome in Bern. According to the local press, Mobutu pays annual rates of $7,000 on this house alone.

Until about 1990, he regularly came to relax at his Savigny residence accompanied by a large retinue. But from then on the worsening situation in Zaire prompted the Swiss authorities to keep their distance from a man they no longer regarded as a welcome guest, and he was granted only the occasional visa.

In August 1996, Bern gave "purely medical" reasons as justification for allowing Mobutu into the country, thus enabling him to have a prostate cancer operation at a Lausanne hospital.

The government also took advantage of that occasion to ensure that the debts of about $1.75 million run up by Zairean diplomatic staff in Switzerland, as well as at the United Nations in Geneva, since 1990 would be reimbursed with greater alacrity.

After being criticised for allowing the Zairean president to spend a long convalescence period on the banks of Lake Léman, the Swiss government refused to allow him back into the country once he had left for the Côte-d'Azur on November 4, 1996.

With events in Zaire taking an ever more dramatic turn, the Swiss government has been coming under mounting pressure to freeze Mobutu's assets. A Socialist deputy for Basle has urged the Federal Council to "safeguard the rights of the Zairean people, who have been despoiled for years", while a Genevan deputy has called for "the immediate freezing of the bank accounts of political figures suspected of having grown rich at the expense of their peoples".

The Swiss government set a precedent on March 24, 1986, when it ordered, on preventive grounds, the freezing of the Marcos's assets shortly after the Filipino dictator had been toppled. Since then, the Manila government has been embroiled in an endless court battle with Marcos's heirs in a attempt to lay its hands on the $350 million discovered in various accounts Marcos had opened in Swiss banks.

So as to prevent a repetition of the Marcos affair, the supervisory body, the Federal Bank Commission, made it compulsory for Swiss banks to identify their clients, and urged them to act with great caution when dealing with foreign politicians, and above all heads of state.

In the meantime, stiffer legislation was also introduced to prevent money laundering. And an agreement now requires banks to act "with all due diligence".

Government sources argue that Switzerland is now better equipped to deal with this kind of situation than it was at the time of Marcos's fall.

According to a foreign ministry spokesman, the Swiss government can decide to freeze Mobutu's fortune immediately by virtue of the powers it enjoys under the federal constitution.

(March 27)

'I get the feeling the most important things go on behind the scenes'

Polish constitution set for referendum

Jan Krauze in Warsaw

ON MARCH 22 deputies in both chambers of the Polish parliament rose to their feet to sing the national anthem after approving a new constitution by an overwhelming majority — 461 in favour and 31 against, with five abstentions.

This massive approval was surprising in that it came after more than three years of political disagreement, in the course of which the Church and Solidarity Electoral Action, a coalition of rightwing parties backed by the Solidarity trade union, had strongly resisted plans for a constitution which, while naturally mentioning God, also referred to the respect due to believers in other "universal values", to the Polish nation and its long struggle for freedom, and to the sovereignty it regained in 1989 after the fall of the communist regime.

The result of the vote was also surprising because, with a general election coming up in the autumn, Polish politics is going through a phase of intense polarisation. After the recent closing down of the Gdansk shipyards and last week's large-scale and occasionally violent trade union demonstrations, the prime minister, Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz, responded by making a tough speech in language that was at times reminiscent of the former regime.

The new constitution has one more hurdle to clear: it will have to be put to a referendum before Pope John Paul visits Poland at the end of May. Supporters of the constitution are keen to prevent the pope getting involved in the political wrangling that is bound to surround the poll.

The referendum can certainly be pushed through in time. On March 24, President Alexander Kwasniewski published the amendments which he is entitled to propose and which members of parliament yet have to approve. He recommended the diminution of parliamentary immunity called for by the opposition, as well as legislation to restrict the concurrent holding by one person of parliamentary office and a civil service post.

Opponents of the new constitution, who are mainly to be found in opposition circles and in Solidarity, resent the fact that their own "project for society" will not be put to a referendum at the same time.

They tried, unsuccessfully, to argue that the new constitution should be adopted only by an absolute majority of registered voters, in the hope of being able to urge people to abstain. They will now have to fall back on campaigning for a No vote, where they will have less chance of success.

The Church, which obtained major concessions (though not the "absolute right to life", in other words the banning of abortion), has welcomed parliament's vote. The current president of Solidarity, Marian Krzaklewski, who has up to now violently opposed the project, may be reluctant, on the eve of an election, to throw all his weight into a battle he is likely to lose.

Both in society at large and in political circles there is now a feeling it is high time to clear up a dispute that has dragged on for too long and to fill a legislative vacuum (the constitution inherited from the communist era is still in force, after being amended by temporary provisions).

A key role in the negotiations that led to the constitution being adopted by parliament was played by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, once one of Lech Walesa's close advisers, and the first prime minister of the Solidarity era.

He is reluctant to take the credit for being "the father of the new constitution". But it was he who wrote the first draft of the preamble, which allowed room for both Christian values and freedom of conscience, thus enabling a decisive breakthrough to be made.

"Although the row over what should go into the preamble resulted in some people taking up extreme positions, it was useful in its way," Mazowiecki says. "When there's a polemical atmosphere, any appeal to people's reason and to higher values is likely to carry greater weight."

He feels the agreement on the constitution was one of those compromises which, like the Gdansk accords of 1980 or the painless transition to democracy of 1989, have helped Poland to move forward.

(March 26)

Free voice of East Timor goes unheard

EDITORIAL

WHEN José Ramos Horta won the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize jointly with his fellow East Timorese, Monsignor Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo, there were hopes he might be able to dispel the dark cloud of silence that has engulfed the genocide of his people.

It was not to be so. The Asian countries and various Muslim nations last week conspired to prevent Horta from bringing up the issue of atrocities committed by Indonesian troops before the UN Commission on Human Rights.

Ever since it invaded the former Portugese colony of East Timor in 1975, the Indonesian army has kept the lid firmly clamped down on the aspirations of a population that craves for freedom.

During his recent Paris visit, Horta seemed convinced that the aura of prestige surrounding the Nobel prize would make it possible for him to address the UN commission. He was prevented from doing so by the religious solidarity of many countries of the South, in whose eyes Indonesia enjoys the distinction of being the largest Muslim country in the world.

But although the Western nations came out in favour — at long last — of allowing Horta to express his views before the commission, the fact remains that they have never vigorously condemned the forgotten war in East Timor, which has resulted in 300,000 deaths since 1975. Why? Because realpolitik is paramount in all dealings with a country such as Indonesia, a big economic and strategic player with huge virgin lands and oil reserves.

The anguished appeal that Monsignor Belo, the bishop of the East Timorese capital, Dili, has just addressed, in absentia, to the UN Commission on Human Rights shows that a courageous Catholic voice in that occupied country continues to denounce the Indonesian army's unjust treatment of the civilian population and a forgotten guerrilla movement.

To the east of East Timor, another divided island, New Guinea, is going through a period of alarming instability. Its western half, the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya, is slipping from the control of Jakarta, which regularly cracks down on tribal freedom movements there.

Sir Julius Chan, prime minister of the island's eastern half, Papua New Guinea, was forced to resign on March 26 by the parliamentary opposition because, to the great irritation of his own army, he had recruited foreign mercenaries in an attempt to put down a separatist uprising on Bougainville Island.

It would be a mistake to dismiss such faraway upheavals as unimportant. Along the geostrategic dividing line between Australia and Asia, the forgotten freedom fighters of East Timor and Bougainville — in their different contexts, for the Bougainville rebels have suffered nothing approaching the tragedy of East Timor — are emblematic of the struggle by Oceanian civilisations to prevent themselves from being "pacified" (for which read "assimilated") and to defend the extraordinary cultural diversity that is their great hallmark.

(March 27)

'Escaped prisoner' with the eye of a painter

The photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson talks to **Michel Guerrin**, who (right) reviews his Paris exhibition, Des Européens



Basilicate, Italy, 1951. 'The only thing one can say about my photographs is that I have total trust in man and none in society', says Cartier-Bresson

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON/MAGNUM

WHEN he was 11, Henri Cartier-Bresson was nicknamed "the wriggling eel" by his fellow boy scouts. The term still applies to the spry 89-year-old — though he himself prefers to call himself "an escaped prisoner".

HCB is a complex character whose favourite sport is contradicting himself and avoiding a straight answer. For instance, one would expect a famous photographer like him to draw attention to the fact that his current exhibition includes certain pictures of his that have never been shown before. "It's of no importance," he says. "I'm not a librarian of my own work."

To those who try to pigeonhole and analyse him, he retorts: "Nowadays people are teachers of everything except sensibility. Instead of really looking and penetrating, they're happy merely to identify. I'd love to put the wrong captions on my photos just so they would look with their eyes instead of their brains."

What emerges from the exhibition's European panorama is HCB's special affection for the countries of the south: "I feel an affinity with the Sicilians. I was conceived in a Palermo hotel while my parents were on their honeymoon. One day I said to Tériade, the great Greek publisher: 'We Mediterraneans . . .' He cut me short and said: 'Henri, go and look at yourself in a mirror'."

It is difficult to get HCB to talk about his pictures. When he is reminded that he has been a great globetrotter, he says: "I hate travelling, but I love living in other countries. Taking one's time is the only luxury. People in a hurry are a pain. Cioran wrote that death never requested an appointment."

When quizzed about the content of his photographs, he says: "Visual rhythm, geometry, compositions which respect the golden section and give the world a structure. I have the eye of a painter."

When asked to expand on the social significance of his subjects, he cuts you short: "The subject has to do with the subconscious. I'm neither an ethnologist nor a sociologist nor a specialist in anything. I'm a reporter in that I keep a record.

"Within a single week I was present at an anniversary of the Chinese revolution, a commemoration of the Russian revolution and the enthronement of a pope in Rome. How does one express such events in photographs? It's a mystery.

"I'm wary of the meaning people try to read into images . . . When I read Saint-Simon, Proust or Chateaubriand, I don't consult the footnotes. I draw sustenance from the text itself, just as in painting I draw sustenance from the substance, not from historical considerations."

Did he feel cut off from reality? "I've been a rebel since my youth. But the young bourgeois Surrealist that I was did a wide variety of jobs during the war — I laid railway sleepers, worked in cement factories, went haymaking.

"My commitment as a citizen does not express itself directly through photography. Europe used to have an equilibrium, which has disappeared since the advent of the consumer society. You can't even eat salmon any more and be certain you won't catch mad cow disease.

"The gulf between rich and poor has never been so huge. What's happening in Albania is not a revolution, but a world that is falling apart. We're not doing anything about it, and that's a disgrace. A Leica can't show that.

The only thing one can say about my photographs is that I have total trust in man and none in society."

For HCB, photography is not an end in itself, but a tool which, like drawing, enables him to be faithful to an immediate, intuitive reality. "You can do anything with a Leica — sociology, politics, anything. For me, it's an immediate way of drawing, of being ready to act."

HCB does not like to be reminded he reportedly invented the term "the decisive moment": "I put that phrase, which was coined by Cardinal de Retz, at the beginning of a book, and it's become a brand name. But I could easily have borrowed a phrase by Chateaubriand."

He prefers to put it another way: he loves the kind of coincidences that crop up because he is always at the ready and "living in the present". "For the past 20 years I've been taking photographs without a camera," he adds with a smile.

(March 21)

European visionary

HENRI Cartier-Bresson's latest exhibition in Paris consists of 180 photographs taken in Europe, from the thirties until the seventies (when he devoted himself exclusively to drawing), *writes Michel Guerrin*.

As is his wont, Cartier-Bresson — or HCB, as he is often known — has had all the photographs specially printed for the exhibition. He has an aversion for so-called vintage prints made at about the time the photograph was taken, which are keenly sought after by collectors.

The hanging of the show is classical. Almost all the pictures are the same size, neither small nor large. Many of them — "photographs that have kicked about all over the place", according to HCB — are familiar masterpieces. They confirm the photographer's unparalleled sense of geometry.

After scrutinising some 5,000 contact sheets, the organiser of the exhibition, Maurice Coriat, was able to put a fresh slant on HCB's peregrinations. "Henri has much more fun in Italy and Spain, where he produces a magnificent record of a mysterious, almost surrealist world," he says. "On the other hand, there are reportages where one can sense he's bored."

It must have been tempting to select from the contact prints pictures that had never been shown before. But it was also risky, because the overall effect of the show might have been blunted by the presence of less extraordinary pictures. So there are only 20 new photographs in the show.

Coriat says: "I dug up some gems that Henri didn't want to be shown, in particular some close-ups. It was because he thought they might remind people of another photographer."

There are some wonderful new pictures, especially the two which come at the beginning and end of the exhibition. One shows a street in Tarascon that is bisected by a sharp ray of sunlight, across which the white figure of a man is hurrying. "My heart missed a beat when I saw it," Coriat says. "You couldn't see anything on the contact print. Henri accepts the presence of light as long as it produces something geometrical."

The other picture shows two naked artist's models asleep on a sofa. Their faces cannot be seen. The picture is a superb example of the relationship between mystery and reality — or between the draughtsman HCB has now become and the photographer who hounds him with his Leica.

Des Européens, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris. Closed Monday and Tuesday. Until June 22

(March 21)

Dufy's motifs rise above the humdrum

Philippe Dagen

RAOUL DUFY is one of several painters — Pierre-Albert Marquet, Maurice de Vlaminck, Othon Friesz and Kees Van Dongen also come to mind — whom art historians tend to bury shortly before or after the first world war, some 40 years before their actual date of death.

They were in the avant-garde of the Fauvist movement from 1905 on. They spent time in Antwerp and Estaque painting with André Derain and Georges Braque. Most were friends and admirers of Henri Matisse and followed him on his excursions into pure and intense colour. They were dismissed by older colleagues and art critics as anarchists, incendiaries and madmen. Their moment of glory came in about 1907.

Five years later, their situation had changed. Braque had joined Pablo Picasso and was helping him invent what became known as Cubism. Derain strove to combine the merits of Paul Cézanne and archaicism. Matisse strode far ahead on his journey towards the paradisiac world of Giotto and icons.

Those who were neither Cubists nor archaicists nor Byzantines did not know which direction to go in. They flirted with Cubism for a time, but only half-heartedly. Most returned to their original genre, the post-Impressionism of the 1890s, and went back to painting harmonious southern landscapes and nude women on chaises longues.

In 1912, Guillaume Apollinaire remarked that Marquet was back working in the style of Claude Monet and that the former Fauvists had nothing new to offer, just staid pictures to adorn staid bourgeois homes. From that point on, they no longer had a place in the history of modernity.

That version of events is broadly accurate. Most of the artists concerned produced nothing of great note during the inter-war years. Friesz and Vlaminck spent their time churning out predictable works. Marquet embarked on an inventory of the coastline and harbours of Europe and North Africa. Van Dongen found a niche as a society painter.

Dufy produced many long series of paintings — races at Deauville, concerts, studio scenes, women bathers and seascapes. He had many admirers, held lots of exhibitions, was commissioned to execute the gigantic Fée Electricité (The Electricity Fairy) for the 1937 Paris Exhibition, and commanded flatteringly high prices.

The organisers of the Dufy exhibition now on at the Fondation Pierre-Gianadda in Martigny have had the bright idea of taking a rather closer look at this apparently humdrum period in the artist's creative output. They concentrate on the work he produced from the end of his Fauvist period until his death in 1953.

The exhibition might easily have ended up as nothing more than a pretty but vacuous display of Dufy's skills. It avoids that pitfall thanks to an intelligent selection of themes and works. There is no dross among the 133 items on show. Dufy may sometimes disconcert, but he is almost always interesting.

The show has been organised according to a straightforward principle: a motif is studied from the moment it appears in Dufy's oeuvre up until its disappearance, and over a period of decades, from Fauvism and quasi-Cubism to the forties and fifties.

This approach brings out the diversity of Dufy's pictorial experimentation, and suggests that he deliberately tried to avoid repeating himself and refused to turn out works that were recognisably "Dufy".

Each motif — the Baie des Anges in Nice, farmers threshing, villas in Nogent, freighters at Sainte-Adresse — is the subject of a series of stylistic variations, from the most figurative to the most elliptical.

Dufy's composition changes little, but his manner is Protean: one moment the workmanship is heavy, the next it is light and rapid; sometimes his brush-strokes fill in every detail, sometimes they are content to merely suggest.

Not all these stylistic exercises are successful. But when he lets himself go, stylises in a slapdash way, neglects volume and juxtaposes garish colours, he produces attractive paintings. They may be frothy, decorative, elegant and a trifle short on significance. But they are appealing and inventive — a far from negligible asset when one compares Dufy with many of his contemporaries.

Raoul Dufy, Séries et Séries Noires, Fondation Pierre-Gianadda, Martigny, Switzerland. Until June 1

(March 18)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

Saudi Bomb Suspect 'Tied to Hezbollah'

Howard Schneider in Ottawa and Pierre Thomas

CANADIAN officials last week claimed that a Saudi man being detained in Canada over his alleged role in a bomb attack on a U.S. military residence in Saudi Arabia last year is connected to a branch of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement.

U.S. officials said the evidence behind the allegations, made in court papers released in Ottawa, add credibility to Saudi claims that Iran was involved in the June 25 bombing of the Khobar Towers military residence, which killed 19 military personnel and injured 500.

Canadian surveillance of the Saudi, Hani Abdel Rahim Sayegh, 28, shows he made several contacts with Iranians after arriving in Canada last August, the U.S. officials said.

While the Canadian allegations are not conclusive, they seem to represent the first independent support for assertions by some Saudi officials that the attack was supported by Iran.

The findings represent "a notching up of our concerns about Iran, but there is still a lot of work to be done to see who is ultimately responsible," a U.S. official said.

If it is proved that Iran was behind the bombing, which Iran denies, the Clinton administration would face a decision about whether to respond with military strikes, economic or other sanctions, or a combination of such measures.

Saudi government officials have expressed the desire that the United States refrain from retaliating on its own and instead act jointly with Persian Gulf and other allies if Iran's involvement is demonstrated.

At this point, there are no criminal charges pending against Sayegh. In an interview on March 17, he acknowledged being a Shiite Muslim active in the opposition to the monarchy that rules Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia, but denied being a member of Saudi Hezbollah and said he was in Syria at the time of the bombing.

But drawing links between the Saudi arm of Hezbollah and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah group based in Lebanon, the papers released on March 20 contended that Sayegh poses a threat to Canadian national security and should not be allowed to stay in the country.

With most of the records in the case sealed because of national security considerations, the court papers offered little evidence to support the allegations other than to state that a detonator found at the site of the blast was similar to those used by Hezbollah members in Lebanon.

On the night of the bombing, an explosives-filled tanker, led by a white car, approached the residence in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where several hundred U.S. military personnel and others lived. The documents allege that Sayegh drove a third vehicle, which signalled the other two with its lights to enter the Khobar Towers parking lot. After the truck was parked near a fence, two men jumped out and got into the white car, which sped off, followed by Sayegh in the signal car, minutes before the explosion, the documents contend.

The details noted in the Canadian documents about Sayegh's alleged role in the attack are thought to reflect information provided by the Saudi government, a senior U.S. law enforcement official said last week.

Saudi officials told U.S.officials in November that they believed the bombing was carried out by Shiite members of a Saudi Hezbollah, which they say is a wing of the radical Lebanese-based group known as Hezbollah, or Party of God — long thought to be funded, trained and equipped by Iran.

U.S. officials had expressed some skepticism about the Saudi claims about Iranian involvement, in part because they had been frustrated by what they saw as inadequate cooperation by Saudi investigators, particularly the Saudi reluctance to allow the FBI to directly interrogate suspects detained in connection with the attack. They noted that the Saudis have a vested interest in portraying the attack as the work of a foreign state rather than of homegrown militants.

But now they say that a developing patchwork of evidence pointing toward Iran must be intensely considered. "We are still working on this," said a senior U.S. official.

Although reluctant to draw conclusions about possible Iranian involvement in this specific attack, U.S. officials have long held that Iran supports terrorism and is a constant threat to U.S. citizens and interests.

Sayegh remains in detention at the hands of Canadian immigration authorities, who must decide if he is to be deported, and, if so, where.

Federal Judge Donna McGillis set a hearing on the matter for April 28, at which point Canadian authorities must present their case alleging Sayegh is a terrorist, and he will have a chance to respond.

Meanwhile, Sayegh has told Canadian authorities a tale of torture and intense political persecution at the hands of local police in eastern Saudi Arabia that drove him to leave the country.

The arrests, beatings and constant questioning of his relatives led Sayegh into strident criticism and organizing against the Saudi government, until he fled the country for Syria in 1995, he told authorities in documents filed as part of his pending immigration case.

U.S. Foreign Policy to Embrace Women's Rights

Thomas W. Lippman

SECRETARY of State Madeleine K. Albright is raising the importance of women's issues in America's international agenda, placing new emphasis on a policy originally promoted by President Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton.

Albright, who took office two months ago, has instructed U.S. diplomats worldwide to make the furtherance of women's rights a central priority of American foreign policy.

The U.S. government has been active in this area in several ways:

- In Pakistan, the State Department contributed funds to a volunteer group running a school for Afghan refugee girls, who otherwise would go without education.
- In Namibia, the U.S. embassy used its entire discretionary fund to finance community efforts to combat sexual violence against women.
- In Washington, the State Department and the Justice Department played host last month to two dozen Russian judges and law-enforcement officers in an effort to stop clandestine trafficking in Russian women, who are being duped into prostitution by organized crime figures who tell them they will appear in folk music troupes.
- And in North Carolina, Albright was due to venture into Jesse Helms country to call upon the Senate to ratify a 1979 U.N. convention on discrimination against women — a treaty that Helms (R), as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, has bottled up.

"Advancing the status of women is not only a moral imperative, it is being actively integrated into U.S. foreign policy," Albright said at a March 12 International Women's Day ceremony at the State Department. "It is the right thing to do, and frankly it is the smart thing to do."

The State Department says Albright "has instructed all U.S. embassies to consider the advancement of women's human rights as an integral objective of U.S. foreign policy."

But what will it amount to in practice? A State Department official said, "We're upping the profile on this issue, but it's not going to start trumping other considerations. We aren't going to beat up on the Saudis" about the status of women in that country, where women cannot drive, or travel without permission from their fathers or husbands.

"The Department of State and the Clinton administration have made some strong and important pronouncements. What you don't see is what it means in practice," said Regan Ralph, who monitors women's issues for the watchdog group Human Rights Watch. "How publicly is this raised with some of the worst offenders? We have seen other issues trump women's human rights. If the administration wants to maintain it is promoting women's rights, it can't continue to do that."

Albright and other officials, however, maintain there is a broad range of activities where progress can be made with a small investment of money or political capital, and that the administration is committed to doing as much as possible. The Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, for example, is working with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees to set standards for refugee camps on the distance between women's toilets and their sleeping quarters. This might seem mundane, but it is part of an effort to minimize the problem of violence against women in refugee sites.

Albright, the U.S.'s first female secretary of state, is using her position to intensify an emphasis on women's right that predates her appointment. Both Clintons are advocates of women's rights, as shown by Hillary's attendance at the 1995 U.N. women's conference in Beijing and the president's decision last year to invest $5 million to provide loans and training for Bosnian women.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
April 6 1997

William Claiborne and **William Booth** on the California-based group who chose to die together

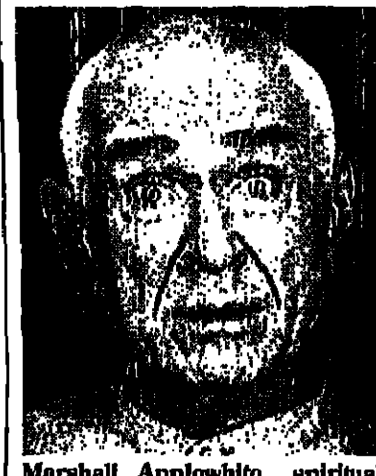
Cult's Mass Suicide Neatly Executed

THE 39 people whose bodies were discovered last week inside a hilltop mansion in Rancho Santa Fe were cultists who planned their mass suicide, videotaped farewells, packed their suitcases for what they believed would be an intergalactic trip and took their lives by ingesting a homemade recipe of drugs, applesauce and vodka, according to law enforcement authorities.

Medical examinations and identification papers found near the bodies indicated 21 were women and 18 men. They ranged in age from 20 to 72, with most in their 40s.

Investigators said the victims, many of them computer programmers from New Mexico, Texas and California, apparently died in shifts, perhaps over a period of days. "It seemed to be a group decision," said Dr. Brian Blackbourne, the San Diego County medical examiner.

They methodically orchestrated the sequence of their own deaths, Blackbourne said, using handwritten recipes to prepare a mixture of phenobarbital and pudding or applesauce, which, according to the recipe, was to be eaten quickly. Copies of the recipe were found inside the pockets of victims. After ingesting the drug mixture, they were advised to drink vodka and "lay back quietly" to die.


Marshall Applewhite, spiritual leader of the Heaven's Gate cult

Although authorities declined to speculate on possible motives, the cultists left behind videotapes and Internet computer postings that revealed much about their theology and their fascination with exploring realms beyond the human existence.

They were members of a group known as Heaven's Gate, a concoction of New Age spirituality, distorted Christianity, Internet computer technology and space-age science fiction. All of this somehow led them to the belief that by killing themselves they were shedding their "containers" and "graduating" to a "higher level," which they thought they could reach through a rendezvous with a UFO trailing behind the Hale-Bopp comet.

Two videotapes and a letter from the cult were sent to a former member, Rio D'Angelo, who now works for Interact Entertainment Group, a software company based in Beverly Hills that had a contract with the Rancho Sante Fe group.

After receiving the items in a Federal Express package on Wednesday morning last week, D'Angelo went to the company's owner, Nick Matzorkis, and told him about it, according to Matzorkis.

The letter stated: "By the time this is read, we will have shed our containers." D'Angelo did not appear surprised, according to Matzorkis, and mentioned that he had been "chosen" to deliver the news of the group's mass suicide to the world to draw attention to their spiritual beliefs.

After Matzorkis and D'Angelo drove down to Rancho Santa Fe, D'Angelo entered the mansion and soon emerged looking "white as a sheet," Matzorkis recalled. It was Matzorkis who then placed the anonymous call to law enforcement officials advising them that they should check on the mansion.

RED ALERT
HALE-BOPP Brings Closure to:
HEAVEN'S GATE

Exit sign . . . The last message to go out on the cult's Web site

At a news conference the next day, county authorities played an eerie videotape showing the quiet scene of mass death as captured by a cameraman following sheriff's deputies through the mansion.

The bodies were reposed on cots and white and blue metal bunkbeds. Their hair shorn in buzz cuts, the suicide victims were dressed in untucked black long-sleeve shirts, loose black pants and black tennis shoes with a white stripe. Three-foot triangular purple cloth shrouds covered their faces and chests.

The rooms appeared sterile and antiseptic, with few personal belongings visible except for the suitcases, neatly packed and in many instances placed at the foot of the bed or mattress. Officials said the suitcases contained mostly clothes. For some reason, the cultists were all found to have a five-dollar bill and some quarters in their pockets.

Along with their own religion, the cultists practiced a normal brand of modern capitalism, developing Web site home pages for clients including a polo club in Beverly Hills. There was at least a stylistic link between their business enterprise, known as Higher Source, and the theological Heaven's Gate. The graphics of Higher Source featured UFOs, stars and other astronomical phenomena that were important to the group's spiritual beliefs.

They appeared to have died in three groups, said Blackbourne, with the first group consisting of about 15 members. The second group of a similar number "cleaned up" the first, covering the bodies with the purple cloths, he said, and the third group helped the second prepare for their deaths.

The last two members of the group — men in their 40s — appeared to take phenobarbital pills and put plastic bags over their heads to suffocate themselves. They were not covered by the purple shrouds.

The cult was the creation of Marshall Herff Applewhite, which he formed in the 1970s with Lu Trousdale Nettles. Applewhite was a former college professor who had sung for the Houston Grand Opera. Nettles, who died in 1985, was a nurse-turned-astrologer who left her family to join Applewhite's spiritual venture. They called themselves Bo and Peep at times, and also the Two. In 1985 the Two became One when Nettles died of cancer.

Applewhite, who had been tormented by his homosexuality, had himself castrated. It was the most sexually revolutionary act anyone could imagine. Years later, some of his male followers would do the same. Applewhite's private torment had been converted into a vaporous dogma, a belief that to rise to the Next Level one had to give up any use of "reproductive organs." One blissed-out young man seen on a cult videotape last week referred to himself as neutered, and said, "I can't tell you how free that has made me feel."

For several years, Heaven's Gate members camped high in the New Mexico mountains above the plains southeast of Albuquerque. They lived on arid land in large, army surplus tents in a compound they called the "earth ship" on land owned by a cult member. The group moved to San Diego County last summer, renting a house that looked a bit like a spaceship. In October the cult moved to the mansion in Rancho Santa Fe. They ran a business making computer Web sites. They ate at the Pancake House, always ordering "Dutch babies," a German-style pancake, and grapefruit juice.

The Internet meanwhile buzzed with news that a UFO or "companion object" had been detected in the shadow of the Hale-Bopp comet.

At about 2pm on March 21, all 39 members of the group walked into Marie Callender's Restaurant in Carlsbad, about 15 miles from Rancho Santa Fe. They ordered the same meal: turkey pot pie, ice tea and cheesecake with blueberries, according to David Riley, a waiter who served them.

The next day Hale-Bopp made its closest approach to the Earth. The suicides began.

In his final videotaped message, Applewhite spoke with wide-open, unblinking eyes, looking as though he wanted to transfix or hypnotize the viewer. His voice was gentle, almost sing-song. "Your only chance to evacuate is to leave with us. Planet Earth about to be recycled. . . ."

All the cultists taped exit statements. They were cheerful, giddy. Said one: "You know, these are like vehicles. I mean if you use the analogy of a car and, you know, people may keep their cars for a long time before they finally wear out and conk out and they die on 'em and, you know, they go and get another car. . . . I mean that's all we're talking about. It's not a big deal."

Another man said: "It's just the happiest day of my life."

A woman said: "Thirty-nine to Beam Up."



Judge Delays Tough Immigration Law

Pamela Constable

A FEDERAL judge decided on Monday to delay until Saturday implementing a tough new immigration law, saying he agreed with immigrant advocacy groups that the public had not been given enough time to learn about the law's complex regulations.

Justice Department lawyers said on Monday that they might appeal the ruling, which immigration officials said would cause "wide-scale confusion" and "significantly undermine" their ability to enforce the new law.

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act took effect on April 1 as scheduled without any of the regulations that guide immigration agents.

The officials warned that thousands of deportation cases could be jeopardized and that immigration agents at airports and borders would have to process more than 5 million people entering the country between Tuesday and Saturday without knowing exactly how to treat them. "I can't emphasize enough, if we have a bare statute with no regulations. . . . there will be sheer chaos at ports of entry," said Linda Wendtland, a lawyer for the Justice Department.

But U.S. District Judge Emmet G. Sullivan said he was not convinced that a "chaotic situation" would result from delaying the regulations.

He said he was persuaded by immigrant advocates who sought the delay that it was crucial to give the public a full 30 days, as required, to learn about the new law. As of April 1, the rules will have been available to the public for 26 days.

"This is not an ordinary law. . . . Four days may seem minimal, but under these circumstances, four days cannot be trivialized," Sullivan said in his ruling, which came after a long day of arguments and recesses, and just seven hours before the new law officially took effect.

Wendtland and other lawyers for the Justice Department, which oversees the Immigration and Naturalization Service, also argued that since they had delivered the regulations to the Government Printing Office on time, that was the same as making them public. The immigrant rights groups argued that the rules were not made public until they appeared in the Federal Register on March 6.

"This is very serious legislation that will affect a lot of people's lives, so every day matters," said Judy Rabinovitz, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union, which sued the government along with the American Immigration Lawyers' Association and the San Francisco-based Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights.

Immediately after Sullivan's ruling, lawyers for the advocate groups announced they planned to file a second suit against the new law, this one challenging its rules on political asylum. They said they feared asylum seekers arriving in the United States will risk being sent home without an adequate chance to prove they fear persecution.

The law's proponents say it is needed to reverse the flow of illegal immigrants, who they claim vie with Americans for jobs, drain public services and cost the government millions of dollars to pursue. But immigrant rights advocates warn the crackdown will separate families, punish law-abiding workers and cause financial sacrifice for people who have been in the U.S. for years.

Immigration authorities say the illegal population includes about 2.9 million foreigners, mostly Latin Americans, who entered the U.S. without visas and settled into immigrant communities, plus 2.1 million people who overstayed their visas. The new law also will affect some 320,000 Central American refugees whose temporary wartime amnesties have ended.

Under the law, illegal immigrants who are ordered deported will have to meet a much tougher standard to win a reprieve. They will have to prove to an immigration judge that returning to their native countries would cause "extreme and exceptional hardship" to immediate relatives — such as a chronically ill child or a frail, elderly parent — who are U.S. citizens or legal residents.

"Just because you have lived here for several years and don't want to go home, that's not a legitimate reason," said Rep. Lamar S. Smith, R-Texas, the driving force behind the new law.

The law also aims to ensure legal immigrants do not end up on welfare after being brought to the U.S. by their families. From March, citizens or legal residents sponsoring relatives had to prove they could support that person at 125 percent of the poverty level, $22,000 for a family of four.

Immigration judges will still give weight to economic factors, such as whether the person facing deportation is the only source of financial support for a child born in the U.S. But just how the new guidelines will be interpreted in court, particularly the stricter definition of hardship, won't be known until judges begin ruling on individual cases.

Crime That Pays In Mexico's Jails

John Ward Anderson and Molly Moore in Mexico City

PEPE de la Rosa is a convicted drug smuggler in the maximum-security section of Mexico City's Reclusorio Norte prison. But for him, maximum security means a two-bedroom apartment above the warden's office with Mexican tile floors, wood-paneled walls, a spacious kitchen and cable television.

De la Rosa's custom-designed "cell" isn't the only relatively luxurious accommodation in the prison. According to inmates and former prison officials, the maximum-security facility — a walled island in the prison — is an oasis where 19 drug dealers, organized-crime figures and other well-connected prisoners have multiple rooms, a gymnasium with weight machines, Domino's Pizza delivery, cooks and maids, regular access to drugs, women and alcohol, and a lush garden where they often host barbecues.

"Those people are not in maximum security because officials want to keep an eye on them," said an inmate in the general prison who often has visited the compound, which houses at least two men accused of connections to the 1985 torture and slaying of U.S. anti-drug agent Enrique Camarena. "They're in there because they are privileged."

Inmates and former prison administrators also described maximum security and an adjacent dormitory at the facility on the northern edge of Mexico City as the center of multimillion-dollar drug and extortion rings that allegedly are run in collusion with prison officials who use prisoner gangs as enforcers.

One former senior prison official for Mexico City calculated about $1 million per month changed hands through bribes to guards, drug deals, prostitution rings, alcohol sales and other rackets involving prison officials and inmates at one of Reclusorio Norte's sister prisons in the capital.

"The system is corrupt, from the high, high up to the very bottom," said the official.

Most of those interviewed agreed to talk only if their names were not published. But lengthy interviews with seven prisoners inside Reclusorio Norte, as well as with a former inmate and former senior prison officials outside the prison, produced nearly identical accounts of corruption and life inside.

The sprawling prison complex is a microcosm of Mexico's justice system, where officials at every level — from street cops to police chiefs, from prosecutors to judges to state and federal anti-drug enforcers — are on the take.

Reclusorio Norte is typical of prisons across Mexico — a reflection of the social and criminal ills that afflict the nation, where the same drug mafias and crime gangs that rule cities and run illicit businesses on the outside move their activities inside the prisons.

As on the outside, it is the poor and uneducated majority of prisoners who suffer most under the corrupt system, forced to pay bribes for family visits, beds and safe passage within the prison.

Prison and corrections officials declined to comment on the allegations of corruption. The director of Reclusorio Norte, Saul Moctezuma Herrera, referred all inquiries to Jose Raul Gutierrez Serrano, Mexico City's chief corrections officer. He, too, refused several interview requests.

City lawmakers threatened to fire Gutierrez last year over allegations of drug trafficking, special privileges granted to prisoners willing to pay large bribes, and human-rights abuses within the prisons. When he appeared before the justice committee of the Mexico City Legislative Assembly, which was investigating him, Gutierrez said, "There is no corruption in any of the prisons. Nor have I witnessed any examples of privileges given to prisoners."

The Mexico City Human Rights Commission, however, has published numerous reports in recent years, the most recent on March 7, criticizing corruption, extortion, special privileges doled out to high-profile prisoners and numerous other problems at Reclusorio Norte and other prisons in the capital.

Designed as a facility to hold up to 1,440 local prisoners awaiting trial, Reclusorio Norte houses as many as 4,000 federal and local inmates who are sentenced or waiting to be tried. While a select few of its high-profile prisoners are living in relative luxury, the majority — like tens of thousands of prisoners across Mexico — are poor men and women who often are victimized by inmate gangs and corrupt guards.

Inmates were interviewed during visits to the public areas of the prison's general population where hundreds of family members arrive three days each week. On visiting days, one prison cafeteria is transformed into a boisterous hall of food vendors, mariachi bands clad in prison khakis and inmates sharing home-cooked meals with family members and friends.

A concession stand offers popcorn, hot dogs and soft drinks and waiters hustle tables. Inmates are allowed conjugal visits with wives,

The residents of maximum security control activities from prostitution to alcohol and drug concessions

girlfriends and prostitutes in a designated building. Outside, the odor of marijuana smoke hangs in some parts of the prison courtyard. Throughout the public areas, inmates show off the cellular phones they carry in their pockets.

Several of the inmates interviewed have visited the maximum-security compound numerous times, often to take advantage of illicit activities conducted by its powerful residents.

Far more insidious than their comfortable living conditions are the illicit businesses the inmates run from their prison apartments and the power they exert over prison operations. The residents of maximum security control activities from prostitution rings to drug and alcohol concessions, according to inmates and former prison officials.

One resident of maximum security was said to forge cashier's checks, using bank stock paper and account numbers he receives from suppliers at local banks, as well as the official company logos. "A 75,000 peso ($9,500) check sells for 5,000 pesos ($632)," said one inmate who said he has purchased checks. "Even people on the outside know where to come for them."

Another maximum-security businessman rents cellular telephones — complete with service contracts — and programs the phones from the computer in his apartment so calls are billed to private numbers outside the prison, according to John L. McCarty, a U.S. citizen who was imprisoned in Reclusorio Norte for 13 months while the United States tried unsuccessfully to have him extradited to face federal tax-evasion charges.

McCarty, and current inmates eager to show off their cell phones, said the maximum-security prisoner rents the cell phones for $125 a month, with an additional $125 charge levied for an international line or $75 for a domestic line.

Many inmates use the telephones to maintain drug-trafficking businesses and other criminal enterprises outside the prison. One trafficker — a mid-level operative for one of northern Mexico's largest drug kingpins — described how he was still doing drug deals from inside the prison using his cell phone.

"My girlfriend is sending 5lbs of marijuana up north [to the United States] next week by [parcel service] — everybody's been paid off. I'm going to earn $6,000 in one week, and I set up the whole thing from inside the prison."

The maximum-security inmate who provides the cell phones lives in one of the nicest apartments, McCarty says. "He had a steam room, a kitchen, sleeping quarters, a computer room, a big-screen TV and a warehouse where he stored everything by cases. He had cases of booze and he was drunk half the time on rum and Coke. When I went there once his wife was spending the night. Another time a girlfriend was spending the night."

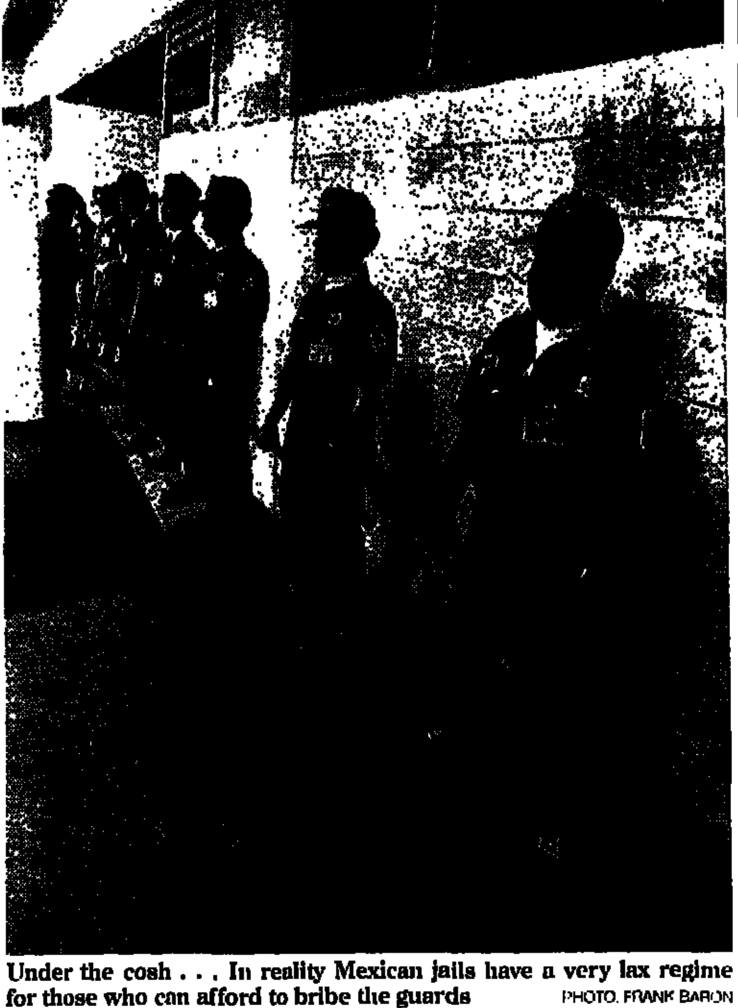
Jose Antonio Zorrilla Perez is in prison for masterminding the 1994 murder of one of Mexico's best-known investigative reporters while he was federal security chief. As one of the most powerful inmates in Reclusorio Norte, he has turned one of his four rooms into a computer room, and once asked prison officials to allow him to throw a lavish wedding party for his daughter in the maximum-security garden, complete with mariachi bands and wine. Prison officials allowed only a small wedding without the musicians, former prison officials said.

Inmates said they have to pay guards to cross from one area of the prison to another, to visit the prison stores, to have conjugal visits, to receive food and clothes from the outside, or to be assigned a better cell. Virtually every inmate has to pay at least five pesos a day (about 65 cents) simply to be counted "present" at the thrice-daily security check-ins.

If an inmate refuses to pay the bribes, according to one prisoner, "They send you to Dorm 10," the dormitory next to maximum security that inmates say houses drug and extortion gangs that work in collusion with prison officials. "The Dorm 10 guards are in cahoots with the inmates, and they rob and mug you so you pay off the guards. It's a vicious circle," the prisoner said.

The guards are required to split the bribes with their bosses, who then divide their share with their bosses, and so on up the ladder to the highest levels of the prison system, inmates and former prison officials say. Profits made on illegal drug and alcohol sales also are passed up the line.

"There's a hell of a lot of money inside, and it just wouldn't [be the case] if everybody wasn't in collusion with everybody else, from the inmates to the highest administrators," said a former administrator.



Under the cosh . . . In reality Mexican jails have a very lax regime for those who can afford to bribe the guards PHOTO: FRANK BARON

Enflamed by An Execution

Donald P. Baker in Miami

MOMENTS after convicted killer Pedro Medina was strapped into Florida's electric chair and 2,000 volts of electricity surged into his body last week, flames leapt from the inmate's head, filling the death chamber with smoke and horrifying two dozen witnesses.

"They're burning him alive," witness Michael Minerva muttered as flames shot four-to-six inches into the air from the metal helmet that covered Medina's shaved head.

It was the second time flames rose from the mask of an inmate's head during a Florida execution, and last week's botched event immediately drew renewed attention to the controversial practice and whether it is an appropriate form of punishment.

Florida Gov. Lawton Chiles said that the state will consider changing its method of execution after the death of Medina, a Cuban refugee convicted of stabbing a school teacher in 1982. Criminologists who study the death penalty said that, around the country, there have been at least a half-dozen malfunctioning electrocutions since 1983. Before last week, the two most recent were in Virginia: In 1990 blood spewed from the mask of an inmate being electrocuted and the following year, a second cycle of electricity was required to execute an inmate.

Witnesses said Medina's last words, as he was strapped into the oak electric chair, were: "I'm still innocent."

Minerva, a lawyer for the Capital Collateral Representative, the Florida agency that defends death row inmates, said that after the flames were extinguished, "you could smell burning flesh," something he had not experienced during five previous executions that he had witnessed.

As the witnesses gasped, Corrections Department spokeswoman Kerry Flack said that "flames were visible on the right side of the helmet" within seconds of Minerva receiving the first of three jolts of electricity.

But Flack said there was "no noticeable reaction from the inmate," whose body lunged backward in the chair when the fatal charge was administered.

Last week's botched execution brought new calls for reform from capital punishment foes in Florida, which along with Texas and Virginia, most frequently invokes the death penalty. Medina was the 39th person put to death in the state since the U.S. Supreme Court lifted a ban on the death penalty in 1976.

Michael Radelet, chairman of the sociology department at the University of Florida and the author of four books on capital punishment, said Medina had a lifelong history of mental illness and that the Florida Supreme Court was deeply divided on the penalty for Medina, voting 4 to 3 to uphold the execution. The case also had drawn the attention of Pope John Paul II and the state's Catholic bishops, who had pleaded for mercy.

An Outbreak of Hype

John Schwartz

VIRUS GROUND ZERO:
Stalking the Killer Viruses with The Centers for Disease Control
By Ed Regis
Simon & Schuster. 244pp. $23

VIRUS X:
Tracking the New Killer Plagues Out Of the Present and Into the Future
By Frank Ryan
Little, Brown. 430pp. $24.95

IN MAY 1995, the world looked to the teeming Zairian city of Kikwit, where the deadly Ebola virus was making another frightening appearance. First discovered in 1976, the elusive microbe had long figured prominently in the nightmares of virologists and global public health officials; In its most virulent attacks, the victims bleed from every orifice, and internal organs seem to melt away.

Ebola had become a viral superstar, propelled to fame by two 1994 bestsellers: The Hot Zone, by Richard Preston, and Pulitzer prize-winner Laurie Garrett's The Coming Plague: Newly Emerging Diseases in a World Out of Balance. As the Kikwit outbreak hit the headlines, sensationalistic movies inspired by the books were appearing on television and in theaters. This multimedia wave raised the status of the Kikwit outbreak from hot news story to obsession; if you think sex sells, just try doomsday.

The journalists who had helped crank up this fear machine became part of the circus: When the Kikwit outbreak began, Richard Preston's publicists called journalists around the country to arrange an interview conference call. Laurie Garrett traveled to Kikwit to write up the outbreak for Newsday and Vanity Fair. Garrett and Preston became commentators on TV news reports.

Now come two science books intended to correct some of that hype: Virus Ground Zero: Stalking the Killer Viruses With the Centers for Disease Control, by veteran science writer Ed Regis, and Frank Ryan's Virus X: Tracking the New Killer Plagues Out of the Present and Into the Future. Both books take us on a tour of modern virology, with starring roles for Ebola, hantavirus and of course HIV. Both would rather teach us than scare us, though they end up doing both.

Regis delights in deflating the scaremongers, and parodies the scare talk surrounding the Kikwit outbreak. Thanks to global air travel, he writes, "Your own home — your very own neighborhood — was only a day away from the Ebola virus!"

He then debunks. Such "hot" viruses as Ebola burn themselves out quickly, and are far from unstoppable. "A virus, including the Ebola virus, was not something that magically tunneled through physical barriers. A layer of plastic or rubber was all that was necessary to contain it, and household bleach was sufficient to kill it."

Regis also focuses on the heroes of virology: the men and women who identify and fight the nasties. As the book's title suggests, Regis gives the most ink to the scientists from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. But he shows that America has no monopoly on viral cowboys — those people who will go to superhuman effort to get the job done.

Sometimes they break the rules of public safety, and even common sense. Belgian scientist Guido van der Groen sweet talks a Federal Express clerk into letting him ship deadly tissue samples from the Kikwit outbreak to the CDC. The CDC's Lyle Conrad brings a victim of deadly Lassa fever into the United States from Africa via airplane in 1969, greatly expanding our understanding of the disease — and earning a loud reprimand from the then-head of the CDC.

This swashbuckling science, Regis gushes, "was a mythic journey, a quest, one that partook of the legendary and the fabulous. . . . It was a romantic adventure in the classic sense."



ILLUSTRATION: GARY VISKUPIC

Ryan's book is both broader and deeper. He refrains from the reporters' sometimes overheated prose, and corrects their errors. But the compelling human stories seem to drag in the telling. Virus X comes alive when Ryan delves into the science, as when he gives a breathtaking, step-by-step description of the process by which the CDC's Stuart Nichol was able to identify the hantavirus's genetic sequence even before the virus itself had been successfully cultured.

LITTLE wonder, then, that Ryan really begins to cook as he draws sweeping scientific conclusions toward the end of the book. He writes that "viruses, so often thought to be nothing more than parasites, play a much wider role" in nature's grand plan. He takes on the vexing issue of why viruses that coexist in relative harmony with their natural hosts emerge to attack humans with such lethal force. Because a bug that wipes out its target population will become extinct itself, it's sound evolutionary strategy to reach an accommodation instead, and to "co-evolve" with the host over time. Ultimately, the bugs aren't out to kill us: They just want to move in, like microscopic Kato Kaelins.

New hosts for the virus haven't had time to reach this accommodation, and so the initial encounters tend to be tragic. Yet once adapted, the viral guests aren't mere freeloaders: Ryan suggests that they become part of the host's defences against turf invaders.

Because we are the invaders of so many remote corners of the earth, then, we run into these "unwitting knights of nature. . . . Although not primarily designed to attack humanity, human exploitation and invasion of every ecological sphere has directed that aggression our way." Ryan ends with a call for better monitoring of and response to emerging diseases — and, just to make sure we get the message, conjures up a hypothetical "virus X," a true doomsday bug as lethal as Ebola Zaire but with the airborne transmission abilities of measles. Brrrrrrrrrr.

Regis, on the other hand, steadfastly refuses to fret, and takes on the increasingly popular apocalyptic notion that emerging diseases are somehow "Gaia's revenge" on humanity for overdevelopment. He cites with scorn the Preston idea that "in a sense, the earth is mounting an immune response against the human species" and Garrett's notion that "the microbes were winning."

Many more Americans have been killed by lightning than the 700 Ebola deaths worldwide, yet "nobody spoke of lightning as 'the revenge of the thunderclouds,' even though there was abundant talk of Ebola as 'the revenge of the rain forest'," Regis sneers. This proliferation of new viral threats is an "illusion," he says. What's new are the tools of detection. "The better the CDC got at identifying the pathogens that caused age-old but hitherto unrecognized diseases, the more it looked as if scads of trailblazing new microbes were out there amassing themselves for attack, gathering their forces, and preparing to bring us 'the coming plague'."

As the scare talk about viruses mounted, Regis writes, "By almost every measure, the world's peoples were getting steadily healthier," with life expectancy rising and infant mortality rates dropping. "Outbreaks of health, however, were not considered 'news'."

Both Regis and Ryan savage journalists for flocking to outbreak sites, adding to the general hysteria and getting in the way of the experts. Like the journalists, though, the virologists exhibit a creepy enthusiasm in the midst of the tragedy. Regis quotes French scientist Pierre Sureau, who explains that for those in his profession, "this is one of the greatest events in contemporary epidemiology. . . . Personally, I am delighted to be in this place, and to participate in such an adventure."

Journalism, and especially science journalism, is not just about getting the facts right. That in itself is a neat trick, and the daily corrections box shows that we don't always hit the mark. It's equally important that journalists get the tone right — yes, to sound an alarm in the face of dangerous complacency, but also to avoid scaring the hell out of people when it's not called for. For those who want to find an antidote to virus hysteria, these two books provide a promising start.

The Contras, Counter-Intelligence and the KGB

David Wise

A SPY FOR ALL SEASONS:
My Life in the CIA
By Duane R. Clarridge
with Digby Diehl
Scribner. 430pp. $27.50

IT WASN'T easy running the Central Intelligence Agency's unsecret war in Nicaragua in the '80s, says Duane R. "Dewey" Clarridge, the former CIA official in charge. There was the liberal U.S. news media, a bad, leftish lot, and a pesky Congress that kept passing "cowardly" laws to try to stop the agency's covert operation. Then there was the president of Honduras, too drunk to meet the CIA, the propaganda balloons that floated off in the wrong direction, and the constant problem of resupplying the contras. Clarridge sent in pack mules from Honduras, but "Once inside [Nicaragua] the guerrillas ate them!"

One scene above all captures the tone of this swaggering memoir. The freewheeling William Casey, Ronald Reagan's CIA director, was pressuring Clarridge to do more to support the contra rebels in their war against the Sandinista government. One evening in 1984, Clarridge was at home, thinking. "I remember sitting with a glass of gin on the rocks, smoking a cigar (of course), and pondering my dilemma, when it hit me. Sea mines were the solution. We should mine the harbors of Nicaragua. . . . To this day I wonder why I didn't think of it sooner."

Mining the harbors was a political disaster, as Clarridge concedes. Soviet, British, Dutch and Japanese ships hit the mines, and Congress and the press went into "hysteria." In particular Barry Goldwater, the conservative chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, was upset. "Dear Bill," he wrote to Casey, "I am pissed off! . . . it is an act of war."

Dewey Clarridge was a natty dresser known for his white silk suits, colorful handkerchiefs, and tough-guy vocabulary. In his 30 years at Langley, he made a lot of enemies, and he settles old scores with glee. CIA chief William Webster, an Amherst graduate and a respected former federal judge and FBI director, is dismissed as a "hayseed" and a "social climber." Webster's sin? He reprimanded and demoted Clarridge over the Iran-contra scandal. Senators are "piranhas," the members of the Tower Commission "the Three Stooges." And so on.

Clarridge has no use for "spongy liberals." But he reserves his greatest contempt for the "hounds of the press." He confesses to "my lifelong distaste for journalists" whose "motives" he began to question as a young case officer in India.

Although he suffers from chronic machismo and an unbounded ego (his treatise on terrorists was "probably the most brilliant paper . . . I had ever put together"), his memoir is redeemed in part by flashes of unusual candor. He describes his mistakes and moments of personal embarrassment, and the agency's failures as unsparingly as his triumphs.

For example, he says he knows of not a single significant case where the CIA recruited a Soviet — even though that was its major target during more than four decades of Cold War. (The Soviet agents who worked for the CIA were all walk-in volunteers, he reports.) He admits that the agency's intelligence about tiny Grenada, hardly a difficult place to penetrate, was "lousy." He tells how the agency used pornographic videos to recruit African diplomats, and discloses that, some time after the murder of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, the CIA had a "relationship" with the Arab terrorist who masterminded the crime.

A dentist's son from New Hampshire, Clarridge went to prep school and Brown University, joined the CIA and was sent by the Clandestine Services, the spook side, to Nepal, India and Turkey, where he spotted Aldrich Ames as poor case officer material — though, to his regret, he recommended Ames be assigned to counterintelligence. After a stint as Rome station chief, he became chief of the Latin America division and architect of the contra war.

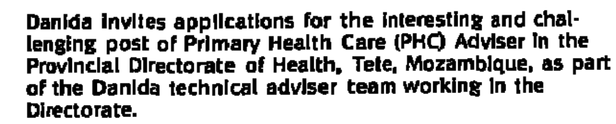
To make sure the contras would "seize the ethical high ground in the conflict with the Sandinistas," Clarridge explains, "we created a course in how the contras should deal with the civilian population." The course taught "what kind of activities — rape, murder, plundering, and other crimes — were clearly off limits."

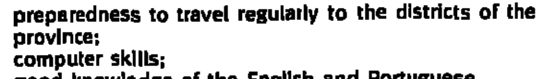
Alas, Clarridge became entrapped in his own war when Oliver North asked for help in moving some HAWK missiles from Israel to Iran, part of Reagan's scheme to trade arms for hostages. Clarridge later testified to congressional committees that he thought the cargo was "oil drilling equipment." In 1991, Clarridge was indicted on seven felony counts of lying, carrying a potential penalty on each count of five years in prison and a fine of $250,000. He wore a camouflage jacket to his arraignment. Clarridge never went to trial; he was pardoned by President Bush along with five others on Christmas Eve of 1992. At his farewell party at the agency, he proudly recounts, he was given "a model of the mine we had used in the harbors of Nicaragua."

Clarridge offers some interesting, even valuable, thoughts on the CIA's problems. He is pessimistic about the future of the Clandestine Services, and — in his typical take-no-prisoners style — charges that former CIA director John M. Deutch "drove a knife into its back."

He says he joined the CIA to advance U.S. interests, defend his country and contain Soviet communism. But such goals are not attained by running covert operations that circumvent the law or by misleading Congress. One does not save democracy by violating its rules.

UDENRIGSMINISTERIET





Public Health Adviser: Tete, Mozambique

Readvertisement, will also be advertised in Danida Vacancies

Danida invites applications for the interesting and challenging post of Primary Health Care (PHC) Adviser in the Provincial Directorate of Health, Tete, Mozambique, as part of the Danida technical adviser team working in the Directorate.

Background
The Governments of Denmark and Mozambique have agreed on a Health Sector Support Programme, initially based in Tete Province. Overall goals of the programme are to contribute to the physical rehabilitation and (re)construction of the health units and health infrastructure, to improve planning and management in the provincial health system, to improve quality of health staff and to secure good quality in delivered health services. Danida will contribute approximately 80 mio. DKK to the sector over a 5-year period.

Duties
Include but are not limited to the following main duties:
- *advise the Department of Community Health on the* development and implementation of rural health programmes, especially through the primary health care worker programme (Agente Polivalent Elementare);
- advise the Department of Community Health on the efficient implementation of MCH/EPI, leprosy, tuberculosis, malaria, trypasonosomiasis, and other control programmes;
- liaise with the Institute for Social Communications in the development and dissemination of health education programmes and materials;
- advise on further rehabilitation and extension of the primary health care network in the province, and in the coordination of district level health interventions;
- advise on primary health care supervision and the implementation and analysis of information provided through the health information system.

Qualifications
- Qualified medical practitioner with preferably at least four years practical experience from PHC in development countries;
- training experience in public health;
- patience and ability to work and cooperate with a wide range of people:
- preparedness to travel regularly to the districts of the province;
- computer skills;
- good knowledge of the English and Portuguese languages.
  If a candidate has no knowledge of Portuguese (or Spanish), she/he must prove ability to learn a Latin language as working knowledge of Portuguese is essential. A course in Portuguese forms part of the preparation for the assignment.

Duty Station
Tete. Private school for children up to 12 years available. Paid positions for spouses are scarce.

Duration of Appointment
Two years with a possibility of extension.

Employment Conditions
Salary based on qualifications, seniority, and family status. Benefits include housing, education, health services, travel expenses, insurance and pension scheme.

Applications
Closing date: 25 April 1997

Danida application forms and additional information on the position can be obtained from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Danida) through our 24-hour automatic telephone answering service, telephone No. +45 33 92 18 88, telefax No. +45 33 92 18 53 or through e-mail UM_sts3@cybernet.dk, by stating your full name, address, title of position applied for, and

Danida File No.: 104.Moz.64.d
Recruitment No. 1997/MOZ.04

Applications should be sent to

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Danida - StS.3
Asiatisk Plads 2
DK-1448 Copenhagen K
Denmark



UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

TRINITY COLLEGE

LECTURER IN ITALIAN

Applications are invited for the above post in the Department of Italian at Trinity College, Dublin. The appointment will be tenable for a period of three years commencing on 1st October 1997. Applicants should have proven research ability in any of the *following areas: post-Renaissance drama, eighteenth and nineteenth* centuries, women writers. Other areas of expertise are not excluded. Particular emphasis will be placed upon innovative methods of language teaching.

Salary Scales:
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Application forms and further particulars may be obtained from:

Establishment Officer
Staff Office
Trinity College
Dublin 2
Tel: +353-1-608-1678
Fax: +353-1-677-2169
e.mail: recruit@tcd.ie

The closing date for receipt of completed applications will be **Wednesday, 16 April, 1997.**

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Ref: 392/97

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Salary will be at the appropriate point on the Lecturer grades A or B scales - salary range is £17,288 to £28,564 pa inc. In assessing the starting salary, consideration will be given to qualifications and experience.
For further details and an application form please send a large SAE to Personnel Services (Recruitment), LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. Alternatively phone +44 (0) 171-955-6183 or email recruitment@lse.ac.uk with your postal address. Please quote reference number B037.
Closing date for applications: 25 April 1997.
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Further details and an application form may be obtained from the Assistant Registrar (Admissions), Imperial College, London SW7 2AZ, telephone:- +44 (0)171-594-8020 fax: +44 (0)171-594-8004

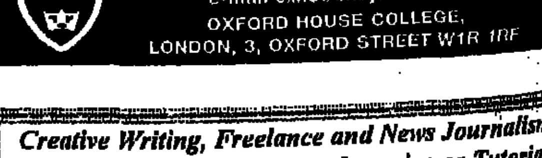
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Eastern Africa Regional Office

SENIOR PROGRAMME OFFICER
FOREST CONSERVATION AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT



The Eastern Africa Regional Office of IUCN seeks to recruit a Senior Programme Officer to manage the forest conservation programme and the social aspects of ecosystem management. The Senior Programme Officer will take the lead in promoting the mission of IUCN, mainly, but not exclusively, as it relates to Forest Conservation in the Eastern African region. He/she will work with other staff to promote integrated ecosystem management approaches to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources throughout the region, emphasising the social and community aspects of integrated ecosystem management. The main responsibilities of the Senior Programme Officer are to:
- develop and implement forest conservation strategy and activities in consultation with, and participation of, IUCN members, partners and relevant commissions;
- ensure integration of forest conservation activities into the overall Regional Programme of IUCN in Eastern Africa and complementarity of the regional activities with the global forest conservation programme;
- maintain an overview of and support forest conservation networks, activities and issues in the region, with the aim of analysing the lessons learned and the policy implications and keeping members of the regional forest conservation networks informed;
- participate in the development and communication of IUCN's policies and positions on major forest conservation issues and on the social and community aspects of ecosystem management, nationally, regionally and, if necessary, globally;
- provide technical support, training and transfer of knowledge to projects paying particular attention to assistance in the development of methods of:
  - working with communities
  - developing, implementing and monitoring collaborative management agreements
  - identifying and working with indigenous knowledge and management systems
- identify the financial needs for the maintenance and development of the regional forest activities and raise funds for the continuation of the activities and the position;
- develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation system for all activities and produce, as required, analytical progress reports, workplans, budgets and project proposals.

The candidate must have post graduate qualifications, at least equivalent to a master's level degree in a relevant discipline and a minimum of five years of relevant and progressive work experience in forest and community related programmes or projects, preferably in Africa. Exposure to and knowledge of major forests and social conservation issues, both national and international policy and field related will be an important advantage. Good interpersonal and communication plus computer literacy skills are required. The post will be based in Nairobi but is expected to spend a substantial amount of time in the field in Easter Africa.

Applications and curriculum vitae should be sent to: The Regional Representative, IUCN Eastern Africa Regional Office, P.O. Box 68200, Nairobi, Kenya, Fax 254 02 890615 by 25th April 1997.

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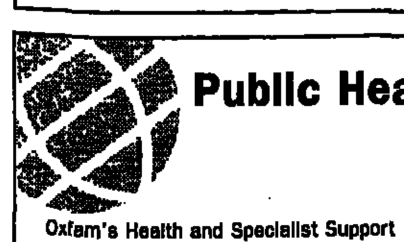
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22 September to 17 October 1997

Further information from Dr John Hailey, International Development Centre, Cranfield School of Management, Cranfield, Bedford, England MK43 0AL. Tel +44 (0) 1234 751122, Fax +44 (0) 1234 754420, Email j.c.wheeley@cranfield.ac.uk Internet: http://www.cranfield.ac.uk./som

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Key Competencies:
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- Strategic planning skills.
- Diplomacy and tact.
- Ability to provide leadership in stressful situations.
- Travel up to 8 weeks per year.

For further details please send a large stamped addressed envelope to the:

International Human Resources Department, Oxfam, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, quoting reference OS/PHTC/HM/GW.
Closing date: 1 May 1997.
Interview dates: To Be Arranged.

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DEPARTMENT *of* EAST ASIAN STUDIES

SENIOR LECTURER/READER IN JAPANESE

Applications are invited for the above post. Applicants should have research interests in any Arts-related field of Japanese studies. Preference may be given to an applicant with a speciality in linguistics, literature, philosophy, art or history. The person appointed will be expected to contribute to teaching and supervision at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

The appointment will be at a point on the Senior Lecturer or Reader scale appropriate to qualifications and experience: £28,552 - £32,266 per annum. The post is for a five-year term starting on 1 September 1997.

Please quote *REF: 796206/GU*

Applicants should arrange for confidential references to be sent directly to Professor Bonnie S McDougall, Head of Department, Department of East Asian Studies, 8 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LW, by the closing date. It is hoped to hold interviews on 12 May 1997.

LECTURER IN JAPANESE

Applications are invited for the above post. Applicants should have research interests in any Arts-related field of Japanese studies and native or near-native ability in spoken and written Japanese. The person appointed will be expected to contribute to teaching and supervision at all undergraudate levels.

Salary will be on the Lecturer A scale (£15,593 - £20,424 per annum) or may exceptionally be at the lower end of the Lecturer B scale (£21,277 - £27,196 per annum). The post is for a three-year term starting on 1 October 1997.

Applicants should arrange for references to be sent directly to Professor Bonnie S McDougall, Head of Department, Department of East Asian Studies, 8 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LW, by the closing date. It is hoped to hold interviews on 13 May 1997.

Please quote *REF: 796205/GU*

Informal enquiries may also be addressed to Professor McDougall. Tel: 0131 650 4227; Fax: 0131 651 1258 or email Bonnie.S.McDougall@ed.ac.uk

Closing date for the above 2 posts: 18 April 1997.

INSTITUTE *for* APPLIED LANGUAGES STUDIES

DIRECTOR OF STUDIES

Applications are invited for the above post. The holder will be responsible for all aspects of course design, teaching and teaching resources. The holder is expected to contribute to the research, development and publications profile of the Institute and to the work of the deparment of Applied Linguistics.

Candidates should have a postgraduate degree in Applied Linguistics, TEFL or the teaching of Modern Languages; should have wide experience in course design; and should have held a position of senior responsibility in a university, language-teaching or teacher-training institute.

Work experience in both the developed and developing world and experience of financial management would be an advantage. The appointment will commence from 1 October 1997.

The appointment will be made on the lecturer A or Lecturer B scale: £15,593 - £20,424 per annum or £21,277 - £27,196 per annum and will be for an intial period of three years with further extensions by mutual consent.

Please quote *REF: 796203/GU*

Closing date for the above post: 7 May 1997

Further particulars including detail of the application procedure, for all positions, should be obtained from
THE PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT, THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, 1 ROXBURGH STREET, EDINBURGH EH8 9TB
Tel: 0131 650 2511 (24 hour answering service)
quoting the appropriate reference number.
http://www.admin.ed.ac.uk/personnel/recruit.htm

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Project Manager for Peru

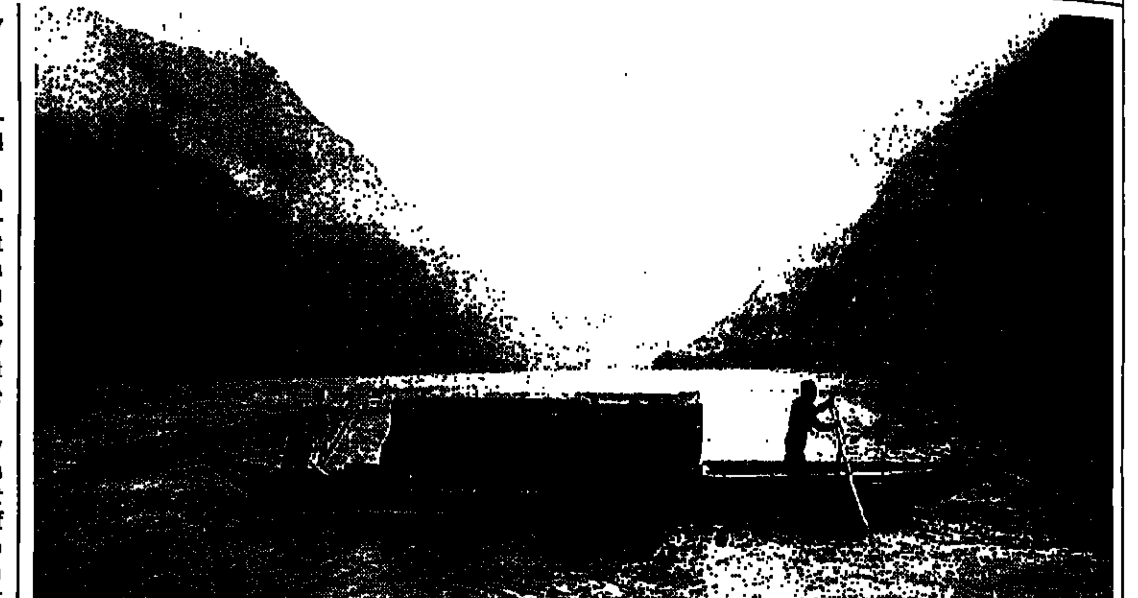
To be based in Lima and Ayacucho with responsibility for the management of a new project in PHC with ex-refugees and internally displaced people in a post conflict area.

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For a full job description, person specification and application form please contact Lucy Medd, Health Unlimited, Prince Consort House, 27-29 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TS, tel: 00 44 (0) 171 582 5999, fax 00 44 (0) 582 5900, email:ae161@dial.pipex.com . Closing date 2 May 1997

China damns antiquity

Andrew Higgins in Beijing on a latter-day Noah who is trying to rescue cultural relics doomed by the Three Gorges dam project



Fishermen navigate the Wu (Sorcerer's) gorge on the Yangtze river — PHOTOGRAPH: GEORGE STEINMETZ

MANKIND'S most ambitious campaign to conquer nature — the construction of a gargantuan dam across the Yangtse River — has hit an unyielding obstacle. A frail archaeology professor is determined to save 5,000 years of Chinese history from a man-made flood by launching an emergency rescue mission on a scale not seen since Noah boarded his ark.

With only eight months to go before China's longest river is blocked by huge concrete slabs to complete the first stage of the 17-year Three Gorges project, Professor Yu Weichao is spearheading a rare public challenge to the priorities of a Communist Party leadership dominated by Soviet-trained engineers.

"As a nation, we want economic development but we can't toss away our history and culture for the sake of economic progress," said Prof Yu, director of the National Museum of Chinese History, which is housed in a Stalinist hulk overlooking Tiananmen Square.

"I ask them: why can't you delay your project for a couple of years? China has already been without it for so many years. Will a delay mean the country will have no rice to eat? Can you really say that because of the construction of this project such a large part of our irreplaceable ancient culture must be destroyed?"

First proposed in 1919 but not formally approved until 1992, the Three Gorges dam is perhaps China's biggest — and most controversial — state venture since the Great Wall more than 2,000 years ago.

Scheduled for completion in 2009, it will create an inland sea — critics say a giant cesspool of silt and sewage — stretching more than 400 miles and flooding more than 140 towns, 320 villages, priceless antiquities, and sublime scenery celebrated by China's greatest poets. About 1.2 million people are being moved to higher ground.

Anxious to preserve what they can, Prof Yu and fellow experts compiled a 21-volume catalogue last year of 1,200 sites judged worthy of preservation. They submitted it to the Three Gorges construction committee, together with a request for 1.9 billion yuan (about $220 million) to finance a rescue programme far bigger than the foreign-funded operations to save Egyptian tombs from the Aswan Dam.

A separate petition signed by 56 prominent intellectuals was sent to national leaders, including the prime minister Li Peng, the dam's most vigorous champion, and President Jiang Zemin.

"Nine months have gone by but we have not had any response," said Prof Yu. "We are getting anxious. We don't understand. This is part of their work but they do nothing. They won't say they approve and they won't say they disapprove. They don't say anything.

"What worries us is that, if these delays continue, we will not have enough time even if they give us money . . . Pompeii was excavated over 200 years, and only half has been uncovered."

Before the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, public criticism of the Three Gorges project was widespread. Critics condemned it as wasteful, dangerous and destructive. The crackdown on dissent after the massacre quickly silenced the anti-dam lobby. A book of critical essays edited by a prominent journalist was pulped.

Today, with the scheme already well under way, China's dam-builders feel less threatened. Instead of confronting the archaeologists head-on, a strategy fraught with risks for a party promoting itself as the guardian of China's past and future greatness, they try to ignore them.

Last month the director of the construction committee, Guo Shuyan, dismissed the concern of archaeologists and historians as a "misunderstanding" and boasted that the project was running ahead of schedule.

"It is quite premature to say how much should be put into the [preservation] fund," he said. "Most of the relics have not been excavated yet and many are just ordinary. If we discover cultural relics of great importance . . . we will spend a lot. If they are merely ordinary, we will not."

Of the 1,200 selected sites, 800 are still buried. These include three Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 221) cities, and remnants of an early civilisation, the Ba, crucial to the understanding of China's origins. The rest range from an 18th century pagoda to an ancient temple dedicated to Zhang Fei, a mythical Chinese Hercules.

Prof Yu estimates that only about 10-20 per cent of the listed sites can be saved. "There is just not enough time. We will have to choose the most important sites for emergency excavation. About 90 per cent will be destroyed."

Work on the main span of the 1.3-mile dam will begin at the village of Sandouping in November, when the Yangtse will be blocked and diverted through a side channel. The water level is not supposed to start rising until 2003, but Prof Yu says he doubts this, and fears that sites could be lost far sooner. "Some people can say there is not enough food to eat, so we should manage with less culture. I've heard this view. I'm pretty surprised by this view. This is not something that should be said by an educated person. It is very inaccurate. This is a view widespread among engineers."

Mr Li and President Jiang both trained as engineers in Moscow — a background that helps explain China's enthusiasm for massive dams. Such mega-projects are now largely discredited elsewhere.

The authorities say they are looking into offers of help from Canada and other countries to preserve the Three Gorges' antiquities. Their critics are not holding their breath.

"Our leaders are afraid to lose face," said Prof Yu. "But losing face is better than losing all this history. Destruction is hardly glorious. We lose even more face if we destroy our past."

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HOTELS & APARTMENTS

A strip of jungle is about to become the world's first cybercity, **Martin Jacques** writes from Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia takes a leap into future

THE HUGE, crescent-shaped window offered a glorious panoramic view of the present and a little glimpse of the future. In the distance was Kuala Lumpur with its cluster of dramatic high-rise buildings including the highest building in the world, the Twin Towers, now almost complete, its stainless steel cladding glinting in the sunlight. Behind the city rose the mountains which form the spine of the Malay peninsula. In Malaysia the present is quite something.

The view is the stuff of dreams, which is apt as it belongs to a dreamer, Azznam Shariffadeen, the brains behind Malaysia's attempt to arrive in the "intelligent" era. He is a short, dapper Malay. It was he who suggested in 1992 that the new administrative centre at Putrajaya, which is about 30km from Kuala Lumpur and was then still jungle, should be designed as the world's first "intelligent capital". Two years later, he went on to play a similarly pivotal role in the birth of an even more ambitious project, the multimedia super corridor.

For the moment, the fabled corridor is a piece of land, 15km by 50km, stretching from the Twin Towers at the centre of Kuala Lumpur in the north to the new international airport at Sepang in the south, taking in Putrajaya, which is roughly in the middle. Much of the land is still jungle, the rest is mostly rubber plantations and palm oil estates.

Mahathir Mohamad . . . first cyber prime minister?

From the panoramic windows of Mr Azznam's office you would never guess that this expanse of land is soon to become a monument to the 21st century. A techno-buff claims it will be "an outrageous opportunity, a multimedia utopia".

Cities in the next century will enjoy a very different relationship with technology. Hitherto, we have tended to regard it as a set of discrete products — cars, railways, telephone, television, microwave — which are but there and stand alone.

That is beginning to change. Technology is coming inside, making connections where there were none, becoming part of the furniture of our cities. Modern planning is not just about roads and estates, it's about an "intelligent network" linking our offices and our homes. Experiments in this are springing up all over the world. What sets Malaysia's multimedia corridor apart from all the hi-tech business parks in Britain and the West is its monumental scale. The corridor will be a huge, dedicated, green field (or jungle) site plonked right next to the capital. It will be the closest the world has yet seen to a "paperless society".

Imagine an area about equal to London from the Houses of Parliament in the north to Gatwick in the south, Richmond in the west and Canary Wharf in the east, being earmarked as an "intelligent corridor", where everything from housing to health, education to production would be purpose-built and "wired up" to the latest specifications.

The audacity is breathtaking. Asian tigers have faced obstacles in trying to close the gap on the West, but one of their advantages is that with no industrial legacy they can at least start afresh with state-of-the-art technology. While Londoners fret about conserving every house, street and lamp-post — and regard even the relatively minimal idea of pedestrianising Trafalgar Square as totally futuristic — the Malaysians get on with clearing the jungle and the plantations.

So what will the corridor be like? Arif Nun, the project's chief operating officer, works from an office in KL that was built in the late 1970s, positively ancient by Malaysian standards. His enthusiasm is infectious. He says: "Just like Mecca and Las Vegas have a clear mission, so does the corridor; it will be the heart of 21st century Malaysia."

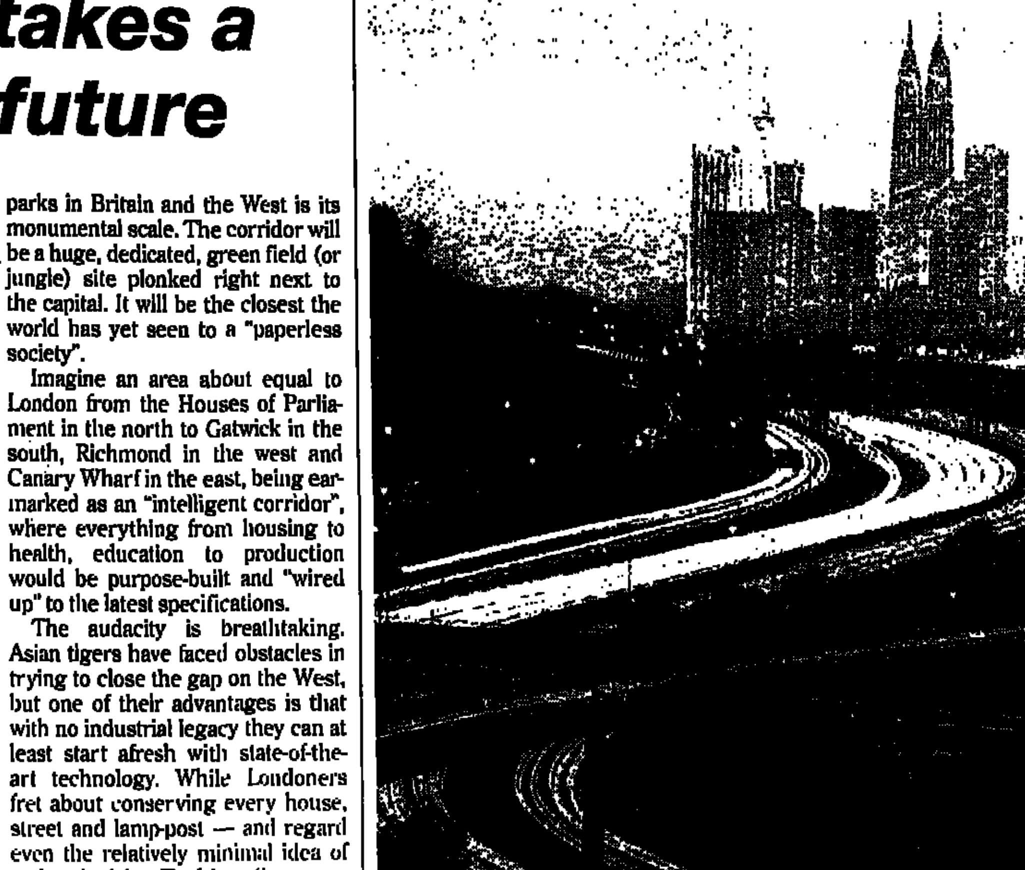
Putrajaya will be the home of electronic government. Mr Nun resists using the term "paperless government", preferring to talk in terms of using much less paper. Government departments in Putrajaya and elsewhere will communicate electronically and many mundane tasks, such as issuing driving licences, will be done by computer.

By 2000, Malaysia will have the world's first national multi-purpose smart card containing each citizen's identity card information and electronic signature, enabling direct access to government, banking, credit, telephone, transport and club services.

Mr Nun believes that electronic government will relieve civil servants of the more routine tasks and "free people to be civil servants. Quality time will be released for real human contact." Likewise, he believes that "smart schools will allow teachers to concentrate on the right-hand side of the brain, the creative side. Educating the left-hand side of the brain can be automated."

Telemedicine is seen as a way of transforming the standards of health care. Using Chinese, Ayurvedic and Western medical knowledge, Malaysia sees itself as a natural centre for telemedicine. Rural clinics will be connected to medical experts in the main cities and to clinics throughout the world using new tele-instruments for remote diagnosis. Doctors will no longer need to be in the same room as patients, with key information being gathered by nurses and technicians using electronic stethoscopes.

The corridor is seen as the regional centre of a new multicultural web of international and Malaysian companies, which sounds bewildering in its complexity. As the prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, put it recently: "Component manufacturing can be done in China, on machines programmed from Japan, with software written in India, and financing coming from the Labuan IOFC [Malaysia's offshore island]. The product may be assembled in Penang and shipped to global customers direct from our new airport at Sepang."



Road to a techno future . . . a vision of Kuala Lumpur that is hastily becoming a 21st century reality

Kuala Lumpur
Petaling Jaya
Shah Alam
Klang
Pelabuhan Klang
Cyber
Airport
Sepang
Seremban
MALAYSIA
16 km
Multimedia Super Corridor
300-square-mile development area for information technology companies

The corridor will be like a global island within Malaysia. It will boast its own government (the Multimedia Development Corporation), its own laws, unrestricted employment of workers from all over the world, freedom of ownership, no restrictions on capital sources, and no censorship of the Internet. It is being created to attract global hi-tech companies and their workers. Several new cyberlaws have already been adopted, including digital signatures, digital contracts and digital intellectual property protection.

Residential areas are alluringly described as cybervillages, with every home connected via optic fibre to the Internet. Asif Nun dreams of a new global community living in the corridor, flying in and out of Sepang airport, eating "Asian-fusion" food and listening to Dangdud music. For technical buffs, the electronic backbone of the new order will be a 2.5-10Gb, 100 per cent digital fibre-optic network that will link the corridor directly with other Asean countries, Japan, Europe and the United States.

The corridor will look and feel very different from the kind of physical modernity previously preferred by Asian cities like Shenzhen, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai and Taipei. Forsaking the global battle of the high-rise, which Asia now virtually dominates anyway, no building will be higher than five storeys.

Inevitably, there will be some environmental damage caused by clearing large tracts of land. But, unlike the urban sprawl so characteristic of many Asian conurbations, over a third of the corridor will be designated as green. There will be plenty of lakes and jungle left in place.

There is something more than a little bizarre about all this futuristic talk. Just 20 years ago, Malaysia was still an overwhelmingly agrarian country dependent on rubber, tin and palm oil. Then it caught the industrialisation bug and transformed itself within little over two decades. It is now the largest manufacturer of air conditioners and video recorders in the world.

For more than a decade the economy has been growing at a breathtaking 8 per cent a year. The aim was to catch up with the West by 2020. Then, two years ago, it began to dawn that breakneck industrialisation would not be enough. The goalposts had moved. Unless Malaysia entered the information age, it would begin to lose ground yet again to the advanced world.

To Western eyes, the super corridor has moved with reckless, alien speed. For an Asian tiger, it is the norm. In 1994, the government established the National Information Technology Council with Dr Mahathir as chairman and Mr Azzman as secretary. With help from the Japanese management guru, Kenichi Ohmae, the idea for the corridor rapidly began to take shape and by August 1995 the proposal had received the blessing of Dr Mahathir who launched it, fittingly, in a ceremony held in the middle of the jungle.

Putrajaya is now in the process of construction. The new international airport will be opened next year. The sheer speed of it all can easily lull one into a false sense of expectation, as if it is all perfectly natural. Hardly. This is happening in a nation still in the process of industrialising, where many of those over 55 live in traditional villages or kampongs, where the education system leaves much to be desired and where there is a desperate shortage of skilled technicians. Malaysia totally lacks the capacity to realise the corridor on its own.

It knows this and that is why it has scoured the world for the companies and techno-brains that can help. The American firm, McKinsey, is acting as consultant and has seconded advisers from the US, Germany, India, China and Hong Kong to work in Kuala Lumpur.

The international advisory panel is informed by the same spirit. Its 29 members represent a Who's Who of Silicon Valley: Bill Gates from Microsoft, James Barksdale from Netscape, Eckhard Pleiffer from Compaq, Louis Gerstner from IBM, Kenichi Ohmae from UCLA and Tokyo, and Noboru Miyawaki from Nippon Telegraph and Telephone.

The first meeting was held in January, not in Kuala Lumpur but Stanford, California, with a plane-load of top Malaysians, including Dr Mahathir, making the journey. It is this can-do mentality which characterises the tigers. Jumping historical stages is their stock-in-trade. Once it was Japanese electronic plants, then a national car company, now a multimedia super corridor.

If this latest gamble with modernity pays off, as all indications suggest it will, then the ideas that inform it will be progressively applied across the country. Malaysia will have moved from a rural economy to the information age with little more than a hop, step and a jump.

Not just that. What is happening in a jungle miles away, by dint of its sheer scale, is bound to have repercussions for cities in countries like Britain that are scrambling to enter the information era on the back of an old and decaying infrastructure. This is an experiment which is going to touch us all.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
April 6 1997

Ronald Reagan has it. So does Dame Iris Murdoch. **Matthew Engel** reports on the latest scientific efforts to cure Alzheimer's, the cruellest disease of old age

Avoiding the fate worse than death

NEXT WEEK, doctors in Britain will be able to prescribe a pill for what is often described as the most common disease. This drug is not a miracle cure. Indeed, it is not actually a cure for anything at all. But it is the first step on a long road that could lead to a revolution, not merely in one branch of medicine, but in our perception of the ageing process, and thus our understanding of life itself.

Alzheimer's disease is believed to affect one-fifth of people in the UK aged over 80. Until now anyone diagnosed with it was assumed to have gone to a place from which no traveller had ever returned, or ever could. Newspaper reports that the tycoon Ernest Saunders had recovered from it were treated with justifiable derision. The news in our own lives that auntie has gone funny, confused, dotty or senile has been considered final.

Alzheimer's has truly been the fate worse than death, the most vicious scourge of all. It distorts the normal processes of love and grief. Patients can live for many years as their mental processes decay, their personalities changing in unpredictable ways until those who care for them have little recollection of the healthy person they once knew.

The disease has no respect for rank (Ronald Reagan), fame (Rita Hayworth) or intellect (Dame Iris Murdoch). It inflicts its pain primarily not on the sufferers but on those who love and/or nurse them. In some respects, the early stages are the worst, when the sufferer drifts in and out of what we call sanity, and at least partially understands what is happening. Donepezil hydrochloride, marketed under the trade mark Aricept, is meant to alleviate that. It cannot treat the disease, but it can retard the symptoms.

The general pharmaceutical principle is similar to that of L-Dopa, used to hold back the early stages of Parkinson's disease. Anyone who saw the film Awakenings will recall how Robin Williams, playing Dr Oliver Sacks, used L-Dopa to treat the mental disorder encephalitis, and saw his patients miraculously recover — then relapse forever as the drug reached the limit of its efficacy.

A generation or two on, no one is making exaggerated claims for Aricept. "It works to a limited extent in a limited number of people for a limited amount of time," says Professor Jim Edwardson, director of Neurochemical Pathology at Newcastle General Hospital. It can also have unpleasant temporary side-effects.

And it comes on to the market at a moment when medical opinion is questioning the point of spending money on treating old people. Even if there were a real cure for Alzheimer's, it would probably be expensive. Does that mean only the rich would be able to save themselves?

Aricept is, however, a start. Over the next year or so several more drugs are likely to be licensed, including tacrine, used in the United States but initially denied authorisation in Britain because of fears that it causes liver damage. Professor Edwardson reckons about 240 compounds are now being developed that might attack Alzheimer's in different times in different ways. Almost every week research turns up new theories and possible new treatments, involving anything from daffodil bulbs to booze. No one is yet sure how these interconnect, where this is going or what it might mean.

"We are entering a phase in which we will be able to prolong the period of life that has quality to it," says Dr Michael Sofroniew, Reader in Neuroanatomy at Cambridge university. "Whether we can do away with the illness is impossible to say and it would be wrong to use the word 'cure'. But it's an exciting time."

Dr Alois Alzheimer was a German contemporary of Freud who became famous for his work on pre-senile dementia — which occurs in patients as young as 29 — published in 1907. This is a rare condition, and it seemed an arcane corner of medicine for more than a half a century. Then researchers at Newcastle began doing routine brain autopsies on old people and found "aniloid plaques", precisely the damage Alzheimer described in his patients.

It took 30 years before a consensus began to emerge from this that "senile dementia" simply does not exist. It used to be assumed that the older people got, the more likely they were to lose their minds. John Bayley, who after 41 years of marriage to a brilliant academic and novelist, is now touchingly nursing Iris Murdoch through the early stages of Alzheimer's, was quoted in the Daily *Telegraph* as saying that the disease was just an extreme manifestation of ageing. But medical opinion now seems to disagree.

Of course, the older we get the more likely we are to forget where we put our keys, and indeed less likely to write a great novel. Dame Iris is 77. But the belief now is that anyone who reaches 90 — and an increasing number do — with basic mental faculties intact will probably stay alert to the end. The most spectacular example of this is the Frenchwoman Mme Jeanne Calment, who has just celebrated her 122nd birthday — blind, deaf but sharp as a tack.

"There has been a huge change," says Harry Cayton, executive director of the Alzheimer's Disease Society. "It is no longer thought that Alzheimer's is an inevitable consequence of age. It is a disease process that must be susceptible to treatment." But what treatment?



Ageing: can it be retarded by drugs? PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN HCLVELL

In many ways Alzheimer's seems to have reached the point cancer got to 30 years ago. This is true in the matter of attitudes: possible sufferers are mentioned in gossipy whispers; and a public announcement is seen as an act of great courage, as it was when the broadcaster Richard Dimbleby revealed in 1965 that he had cancer. It is true also in the matter of research: scientists think they can work out treatments, but as yet hardly know how.

THE difference is that cancer research was the charity of choice for garden fêtes and coffee mornings even in 1965. And nothing has changed. The Alzheimer's Research Trust quotes figures showing the comparative UK annual research budgets: cancer, £110 million (£474 per sufferer); heart disease, £32 million (£109 per sufferer); Aids, £16 million (£15,000 per sufferer); Alzheimer's, £6 million (£10 per sufferer).

When the Alzheimer's Disease Society was founded, in 1979, it was designed to support those caring for patients. Its interest in research has been even more belated, though it now funds 16 research fellows who are quietly delving into different aspects of the disease in colleges and institutions around Britain.

The society's thunder, never all that loud, has lately been stolen by the Cambridge-based Alzheimer's Research Trust, with an all-star list of supporters (Prince Philip, Princess Diana, Britt Ekland, Sir David Frost, Sir Cliff Richard), who are trying to raise £4 million to complete the building of a research centre in the city. "The feeling among scientists is that the quickest and most efficient way to combat the disease is to have an efficient, multidisciplinary research centre where people can have cross-fertilisation of ideas under one roof," says the Trust's chairman, Jan Morgan.

But it could be years before anyone at Cambridge gets out a microscope, and some experts think the Trust is wrong-headed. "What we need are large sums of money for research now," says one bitterly, "not investment in plant. With e-mail and the Internet, there is no need to be on the same site to work in partnership."

Despite the squabbling, hardly a week goes by without some new and intriguing line of inquiry coming up, in Britain and elsewhere. In 1993, a team at Duke University in North Carolina discovered the connection between Alzheimer's and the gene that produces a substance in our bodies called apoliprotein E. Everyone has two of these genes, one from each parent, but it comes in three varieties: apoE2, apoE3, and apoE4. Those with two apoE4 genes (2 per cent of the population) seem most at risk, but E2 appears to act as some kind of protector.

This has led to alarmism that all those with a parent with Alzheimer's will inevitably fall victim themselves, or at least that one of two siblings must. But most scientists think it is far more complicated. "We now know that it is not a single disease," says Professor Edwardson. "There are at least six genetic factors and maybe 106 environmental ones."

Everywhere there are loose ends. Last week newspapers reported a finding from Bordeaux university that anyone who drank three or four glasses of wine a day had far less chance of getting Alzheimer's than a teetotaller. This was convenient for the local industry, cheering to many readers, and bewildering to colleagues elsewhere convinced that alcohol damages brain cells.

But such stories are coming in every week. Researchers in Manchester have found a link between Alzheimer's and the herpes virus that causes cold sores. Other scientists have isolated two types of daffodils, which contain galanthamine, a promising source of treatment; alas, it requires 10 tons of bulbs to produce 1kg of the drug.

Last month came the news that patients who took ibuprofen, an anti-inflammatory drug, were less likely to develop Alzheimer's. This discovery arose from the chance observation that arthritis sufferers seemed comparatively immune. Aluminium has been mentioned as a contributory factor; as have stress and strokes so small you hardly notice them. Victims of traumatic brain damage — car crash victims or boxers — are prime candidates.

OESTROGEN is a possible cure. Women who have had hormone replacement seem to do well. Nicotine and alcohol are contenders as both contributors and cures. Baffled? So are the scientists. Alzheimer's research may revert to something of its former obscurity while scientists grapple with the ideas raised by the latest discoveries.

In the meantime Aricept will be out there. "It's a huge watershed," says Dr David Wilkinson, a consultant at Moorgreen Hospital, Southampton, who conducted trials of the drug. "One doesn't want to overegg the pudding, but we saw tangible benefits to a proportion of patients, maybe 40 per cent. It wasn't just that their memories improved, they were able to keep playing a part in family life, to initiate conversations, to take an interest. One of the major components of the early stages of Alzheimer's is an apathy that is sometimes construed as depression. It's too early to quantify the long-time impact, but we have seen the disease progress more slowly."

But patients will have to get past budget-conscious doctors before they reap any benefit. Harassed doctors tend to be dismissive of old people, telling them they are getting forgetful. Specialists now think it is crucial to know if this is Alzheimer's, depression or absent-mindedness.

On the other hand, treatment costs, and everyone knows money in the health service is scarce, especially for the old. "If someone says it's this, or two extra cots in the special care baby unit, you're stuffed, aren't you?" one specialist put it.

"We can crack this," says Harry Cayton. "We don't yet know how. But Alzheimer's is not inevitable. If we put even half the resources we put into dementia that we put into other diseases, we forty-somethings could save ourselves from it."

Alzheimer's Disease Society, Gordon House, 10 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1PH (+44 171 306 0606).
Alzheimer's Research Trust, G J Livanos House, Granhams Road, Cambridge CB2 5LQ (+44 1223 843899)

Alzheimer's is the most vicious scourge of all. It distorts the normal processes of love and grief. Now a new drug is offering a glimmer of hope

Scientist Elaine Wong, part of the team that developed Aricept
PHOTO: GARRY WEASER

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
April 6 1997

More than 3,000 bison live in Yellowstone but are at risk if they roam outside the park PHOTO. GERALD SIOEN

In the bloody steps of Buffalo Bill Cody

Ian Katz in Gardiner, Montana

"*AH, BUFFS*," says Joe Sperano, squinting through an old telescope at a tawny hillside across the Yellowstone River. "See these guys? These guys are destined to die in the next day or so."

The dozen shaggy beasts Sperano has spotted are standing just inside Yellowstone Park, America's oldest federal nature reserve. As soon as they cross the park's unmarked boundary in search of food, they will be shot or shipped to slaughter.

This winter, more than 1,000 Yellowstone bison have met this fate in the biggest slaughter of wild buffalo since the 1870s. But, unlike the vast herds wiped out by Buffalo Bill Cody and his contemporaries, the Yellowstone animals are not the victims of opportunist hunters. They are being captured by the park rangers who protect them for most of the year and killed by Montana state officials.

Montana says that bison leaving the park must be killed because up to half the herd is infected with brucellosis, which causes pregnant females to abort. The state fears the disease may be transmitted to the cattle that form the mainstay of its economy. Yet environmentalists and the US Parks Service, which runs Yellowstone, insist the risk is slim.

The "bison war" has pitched federal agencies against each other. In Montana, the fourth largest (and sixth least populous) state, it has widened the gulf between conservative ranchers and liberal "outsiders" who have flocked to the state, drawn by its expanses of wilderness and high standard of living.

"Montana would shoot its own mother if she was on four legs," said Cleveland Amory, president of the Fund For Animals, which has called for a tourist boycott of the state. "But the Park Service is also cowardly and cruel. It's a sickening example of American gutlessness that goes right to the top."

The issue is especially charged because the buffalo is a symbol in American culture of the once wild West and a focus for national guilt over the worst excesses of its frontier past, of which the great buffalo slaughter of the 1870s is regarded as one of the more dismal chapters.

If the slaughter of up to 30 million bison in a dozen years remains a source of shame, the rescue of the Yellowstone herd from near annihilation remains one of America's proudest conservation triumphs. In 1923, there were 23 buffalo left in the 2.2 million-acre park. Now the herd is estimated at 3,200 to 3,500.

In one of the many ironies of this complex and bloody saga, the US Park Service had planned an exhibition to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Yellowstone this year. It was to document the saving of the bison. Now Park Service rangers, whose badges depict the bison, are compelled by court order to assist Montana in destroying animals that leave the park.

Powerful economic forces are driving Montana's bison policy. The state spent $36 million to eradicate brucellosis from its cattle herd. It was rewarded by the federal government with "brucellosis free" status, which helps it to sell livestock and meat to other states.

Some environmentalists see the bison crisis as merely the latest manifestation of an age-old conflict. "It's a continuation of the policy to put the cow above all other interests," said Jasper Carlton, of the Biodiversity Legal Foundation. "They're willing to destroy the last large free-ranging herd of bison in the United States for the sake of a few cows."

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IF the next sperm in the queue had fertilised my mother's egg, would I have been different?

THE idea that I would still exist even if my mother had married a different father, or if conception had taken place a month later than it actually did, or if the second spermatozoon had won the race to the ovum, originates with St Thomas of Aquino, who held that the soul is infused into the body at the moment of conception.

If we disregard the notion of "soul" and look at what happens when a fertilised egg splits to form identical twins, we realise that we get two human identities where before there was only one.

We must deduce that if the next sperm in the queue had fertilised my mother's egg I would not exist. — *(Dr) Andre Blom, Ontario, Canada*

WHAT are the three greatest conspiracies of all time?

THE OED defines the verb: "to combine privily to do something criminal, illegal, or reprehensible (esp. to commit treason or murder, excite sedition, etc.)".

This points clearly to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. If you tend toward the interpretation that the whole thing was instigated by James I's secretary of state, Robert Cecil, in order to legitimate a Catholic purge, and that the executed "conspirators" were falsely promised an amnesty for their participation — this is surely the single greatest conspiracy of them all. — *Tony Walton, Hove, East Sussex*

WHY did some Normans whose names began with f, use two small fs instead of one capital F?

FOR effffect. — *Peter Denton, Eddington, Middlesex*

THE use of two small fs has nothing to do with the Normans. It appears to have begun in the 18th century with the misunderstanding of a manuscript form of capital F, resembling two small fs joined together. The best comment on this silly practice is a note on the peerage of ffrench of Castle ffrench (1798) in The Complete Peerage (1926): "This ffoolish ffancy, which is aggravated if the F be written Ff, has happily not been repeated by any member of the peerage, and, considering the spread of education, is not likely now to occur again". — *Athol Murray, Edinburgh*

Any answers?

WE ARE used to British consumer boycotts — South Africa/apartheid, France/nuclear tests — but is Britain ever boycotted? — *Denis Reed, Eaglescliffe, Cleveland*

WHAT is the derivation of the word "joy stick"? — *Margaret Osmond, Upper Shirley, Southampton*

WHY "bubble and squeak"? — *Mavis Frome, Rome*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

Letter from Namibia Margaret Bradley

Driven to drink

I WAS heading north on the great Windhoek-Angola road when a green cylindrical object came hurtling out of the passenger window of an overtaking car. The bottle shattered on impact, sending a host of lethal shards flying up to chip my windscreen. I thought about accelerating and complaining but, apart from the obvious danger to a woman driver I should have needed a more powerful car. They were cruising above 180kmh.

On roads which are Roman straight you can see at least 20km ahead and may only pass one other vehicle every 10 minutes. Many Namibians take this as a licence to drive at terrifying speeds. They've got a lot of bottle in more senses than one. Their accidents are horrendous: flattened cars on the roads, rolled ones on the gravel pistes where you can terraplane on dust just as English drivers can aquaplane on water.

Namibia is one of the last countries on earth where the state has not yet managed to penetrate every corner of human existence. There's a self-sufficient, frontier spirit amongst the people — it's the Old World's Wild West. Men have been accustomed to making their own rules. Murder is against the law but a lot else has either been permitted or has never come to the attention of the authorities in Windhoek. When a farmer's house is so isolated and his farm so vast that his nearest neighbours lie beyond the horizon; when his lonely dust road crawls on for three hours before reaching the nearest small town, who can do more than guess what goes on in his lonely household?

One thing that certainly does go on is drinking — to relax, to celebrate, to drown sorrows . . . to fill the emptiness. German beers course down sunburnt throats straight to the white man's bloated belly.

A weekend braai, Namibia's barbecue, is much more than a meal, it's a therapeutic event, an outpouring of news: a booze-up. And some of the bottles accompanying the guests on their 100km drives to and from the party always seem to end up littering the roadside. Even on the least travelled of gravel roads, that cross uninhabited wastelands of sand dune or scoured rock — paradoxically called by the pioneers the thirstlands — there's a cast off bottle every few metres.

Round the edges of small towns the destructive element of human nature takes over as little boys smash them for fun. The desert twinkles in the sun like a carpet thick with diamonds, a glittering symbol of humanity's eternal indifference towards our planet.

At Okahandja I stopped to buy a carved wooden bowl from one of the barefoot Caprivi carvers who tout their wares at the edge of visited by tourists.

"Doesn't the broken glass worry you?" I asked the men. "Aren't you afraid of cutting your feet?" They roared with laughter.

"I've never even thought of it," one replied. Of course he hasn't: all the children play football on pitches as studded with splinters as a fakir's bed with nails.

TRADITIONALLY, the black Namibian had to keep all his hopes and dreams bottled up. Drink numbed his mind to apartheid before independence. Drink has compensated him for his unfulfilled hopes since then. Some school teachers are incoherent by 10am: some of their students are absent anyway, sitting on the steps of the bottle store. Every hamlet has a bottle store even if nothing else. But for neither black nor white it seems is there such a thing as a drying-out clinic anywhere in the country.

In Oshakati, home to the teacher training college in Ovamboland, I stumbled upon a bottle graveyard. Scattered over the sandy degraded savanna land amongst half-finished buildings were thousands of beer bottles. My heart sank.

Yet, as I wandered through the wilderness, I discovered that someone had definitely been doing some lateral thinking. The incomplete circular buildings were bottle houses, some just waiting for a cone of traditional thatch. Sandwiched between layers of mud, the bottles were the building blocks of a guest wing to house teachers and lecturers visiting the college.

And answering Namibia's thirst for knowledge, some of the bottles have even been used to build the local library.

A Country Diary

A Harry Griffin

THE LAKE DISTRICT: "We won't see anybody today," I told my companion as we drove to Mungrisdale beside the Glenderamackin for an easy round of the little-visited Bowscale Fell tops. Judge our surprise, therefore, when we found the lonely hamlet crowded with cars and, high up on the fell, scores of serious-looking men in flat caps with binoculars and walkie-talkies. We had stumbled on a meet of the Blencathra Foxhounds and, whatever one's views of hunting, it certainly added unexpected colour and even excitement to our day. Indeed, right at the start, we had only climbed a couple of hundred feet up Raven Crags when a fox suddenly streaked across the fellside just below us and vanished into some clumps of gorse. Later, we heard from the red-coated huntsman that this fox had been dispatched. A second fox, he told us, had been accounted for in the rough crags above Bowscale Tarn, but a third fox that had been fighting for its life, harried by a score of hounds in a nasty-looking gully on Bannerdale Crags, had escaped. From a perch high up on The Tongue, half a mile away across the trough of Bannerdale, we had watched this unequal battle in the afternoon sunshine for some time — an occasional flash of red in the crag, and the whitish coats of the yelping hounds racing up and down and across the rock and scree. I told the huntsman, down at the farm later, that I was glad this one had got away and he didn't seem to disagree. "He put up a good fight," he said, almost with admiration. "But we'll get him next time." All this on the sunniest day so far this year: cloudless blue skies overhead, with superb views of snow-streaked Helvellyn and Blencathra and, far across the Solway, into Scotland.

Dance by your man

DANCE
Judith Mackrell

YOU don't have to be a regular reader of the Royal Ballet's cast lists to have heard about the rivalry between the company's starriest ballerinas, Sylvie Guillem and Darcey Bussell. The battle lines are drawn not over who dances what roles but over who gets the Royal's ablest and tallest partner, Jonathan Cope. So for many in the Opera House, the sight of Bussell shaking Guillem by the scruff of the neck, and Guillem retaliating with a raised dagger — all for the love of Cope — had an especially comic frisson.

Classical ballerinas rarely fight dirty but this was Petipa's **La Bayadère** (1877) in which Nikiya, the ardent temple dancer, and Gamzatti, the rich bitch princess, vie for the hand of Solor. When Bussell first danced Gamzatti, aged 20, you wondered at her temerity in scrapping with world-class Nikiyas like Altynai Asylmuratova. Now, a star herself, it's clear how much she has grown into the role.

Where she used to show a character motivated by blind greed, a woman with the instincts of a spoilt child, she is now terrifyingly calculating. There's a radiant, implacable cruelty in the way she forces Solor to kiss her hand in front of Nikiya.

Much less has changed in Guillem's Nikiya. In the mock-oriental choreography of Act 1, her extravagantly loose-jointed body has the look of a hothouse exotic — exquisite and fragile — while her acting is quick, responsive and intelligent.

But as Nikiya's ghost in the Shades Act it's as if she has no memory of the passionate woman she was. Though Guillem's technique is still one of the world's wonders, her phrasing is so clipped, even harsh, that her dancing lacks sparkle and air. Nikiya in the Kingdom of the Shades looks as if she is doomed to an eternity of dancing steps she dislikes.

Cope used to keep his feelings under wraps as a dancer but now seems to be learning to enjoy himself. When he presses his face against Guillem's torso, you can feel the heat of Solor's frustrated passion, and in his solos he plays mischievously with an unBritish flamboyance.

Tetsuya Kumakwa's Bronze Idol solo possibly ought to be banned, however, since his monstrous virtuosity brought the whole show to a standstill. It's a hilarious, hokey and sometimes heartbreaking ballet — nights at the ballet don't come any more fun than Bayadère.

The choreographer Lloyd Newson has always had an argument with dance — the kind of dance in which beautifully honed bodies perform elegantly crafted movement without a thought troubling their pretty heads. And when he founded his own company, DV8, it was to let dancers smash through their studio mirrors and face the real world.

During the past 10 years his works have dealt with issues such as power, sexuality, alienation and religion. But in **Bound to Please**, the argument with dance comes to the surface, as the art form is turned into a metaphor for the social rules that silence our dissenting individuality. Pliés and pointed feet become the equivalent of "please" and "thank you", and the dancer's quest for perfection is a stifling pressure to conform. It's an obvious equation to make — and one of the problems with this curiously half-baked piece is that it's also a very superficial one.

Bound To Please opens with a classic ballerina image as Diana Payne-Myers (who happens to be in her sixties) revolves round the stage to tinkly Tchaikovsky, curving her arms through classical ports de bras. This is ballet locked in its daintiest manoeuvres — and it is then violently disrupted by the other dancers, who burst into their own very undainty sequences.

As the dancers' personalities gleam and snag through their movement, it looks like the start of something interesting — Wendy Houstoun teetering on the edge of sensual abandonment, vulnerable and eager; Robert Tannion's hard, jerky rhythms signalling danger and defence.

After this, however, most of the characters fade into the background, leaving only two stories to develop. The first is that of Houstoun, who as a dancer always fluffs her steps and as a woman is unable to fit in with her peers.

Far more interesting though is Payne-Myers's story. As the others strive to be like each other, she is almost girlishly content to be herself and even happier to pair up with the group's scapegoat, the oikish Liam Steel. In a giddy jitterbugging duet, she dances purely for fun; and later, when we see her and Steel embracing naked, she glows with poignant dignity.

Pure dance, though, can be complex, passionate and very grown-up, and I've always distrusted Newson's desire to put it on the other side of the moral fence from the kind that deals with issues. Pure dance and dance theatre have always fed into each other — as Payne-Myers herself proves. She is without question the most challenging person on stage, yet her opening ballet sequence is also one of the most mesmerising.

Ballet has its rules, and although they won't work for some, for others they're a discipline through which they can best express themselves. There are many truths to be told in dance, and as many ways to tell them.


A big hand for the mesmerising and beautiful Diane Payne-Myers

Harold Perrineau as Mercutio, a black disco queen, in Baz Luhrmann's Romeo And Juliet

Bard's in the hood

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

ANYONE willing to accept Mercutio as a black disco queen who turns up at the Capulets' masquerade ball in a white wig and a spangled miniskirt to sing a musical number on the stairway ought to have no problem with Baz Luhrmann's contemporary version of **Romeo and Juliet**. It makes Derek Jarman's The Tempest — with its dancing sailor boys and Elisabeth Welch singing Stormy Weather — look positively sedate.

Luhrmann, the Australian director of Strictly Ballroom, insisted on having William Shakespeare included in the title, and one can see why. Even though Luhrmann uses the Bard's words, or at least the remains of them, there are times when you might otherwise be confused as to who actually wrote the greatest love story in the world.

The film is set in a big American city called Verona Beach, which looks as if it's doubling for Miami, though it is actually Mexico. And it turns the Montagues and Capulets into rival gangster kingdoms — one Latino, one white — who are at odds with each other when Romeo and Juliet fall in love.

But it isn't this that makes the film daring, since pushing Shakespeare into contemporary times is *de rigueur*. It's the style of the piece that amazes. Designer guns, customised cars and art deco trappings vie with TV newscasters speaking in iambic pentameter, street kids shouting Shakespeare's "Ho, there!" lines above the noise of the traffic, and music that's enough to drown out all but the most stentorian of the cast.

When you add rapid cutting, dizzying zooms and speeded up action to the equation, you have a recipe for near-disaster which, somehow, Luhrmann turns into near-triumph. Despite constant mental tut-tutting (especially at the beginning when the general hustle and bustle makes the whole thing look like an MTV video), you find yourself being drawn in.

The main performances help. We have a Romeo and Juliet who actually look the right age — a feature Zeffirelli capitalised on in his popular 1968 version. Leonardo DiCaprio seems fey enough to have a best friend like Harold Perrineau's Mercutio, but he says his lines with sensitivity, managing to suggest the boy behind the man he's just becoming. And Claire Danes is about the best thing in the picture as Juliet, even if she does have to play the balcony scene in a swimming-pool.

There are other good American actors in the film — some getting their tongue round the lines better than others, like Paul Sorvino and Brian Dennehy as the leaders of the two clans. But it is rather a relief to hear Peter Postlethwaite as Father Laurence and Miriam Margolyes as the Nurse, both of whom know exactly what they are doing with the skinny material available.

In the end, the adaptation works because Luhrmann knows how to tell a story, even if he pushes it along as fast and furiously as humanly possible. You gulp but in the end you accept. And, in accepting, you notice the brilliance of Don McAlpine's colour-drenched cinematography, the matching imagination of Catherine Martin's production design, and the costumes from Kym Barrett.

The whole thing is a treat for the eye, and it has the courage of every one of its convictions. Silly as it is in places, this Romeo And Juliet knocks you down, picks you up, dusts you off and finally convinces you that Shakespeare wouldn't so much turn in his grave as giggle with approval at the cheek of it all.

IF YOU want to see what belching volcanoes and Pierce Brosnan out of his 007 kit can do in concert, **Dante's Peak** is for you. Brosnan is a vulcanologist who goes to a small Northwestern township known for its beauty, falls in love with the mayor (who, luckily, is Linda Hamilton) and is just about to erupt when the volcano does it for him. So he has to save her and the children from the disaster he's been predicting all along. He can't do much about grannie, who gets fried.

It's the maelstrom of lava and ash that counts, allowing the special effects department rather more room to work than the poor devils who did the rewrites. Brosnan has merely to look lovelorn, anxious, noble and relieved in turn to carry off his part. If there's one thing worse than acting with kids and animals it must be filling in the spaces between the blow-outs in disaster movies.

This one is not too long. But Dante's Peak goes in one eye and out the other as soon as you leave the cinema.

Julian Schnabel's **Basquiat** isn't much more substantial, but it is about an intrinsically more interesting subject. He is Jean-Michel Basquiat, the young black graffiti artist and painter who conquered New York's art world in the eighties before letting drugs conquer him.

The film is uneven and patchy. But, at its best, it makes us wonder why we so often help in the destruction of those we most admire. It has a highly personable performance from Jeffrey Wright as Basquiat, who endears himself by lunching with David Bowie's Andy Warhol and making the old skinflint pay. Bowie is fine, by the way, and with Dennis Hopper, Gary Oldman and Willem Dafoe also in the cast, there is no lack of distinctive playing. Schnabel directs with imagination but also pretension. The film has atmosphere and style, even if it is almost entirely without narrative guile.

Love Lessons is a Swedish film made by Bo Widerberg, the director responsible, in 1967, for Elvira Madigan, a love story so successful that the Mozart piano concerto used on the soundtrack is still sold as the Elvira Madigan Concerto. That's fame. Widerberg was never again to have such a triumph, but Love Lessons (called All Things Fair at 1996's Berlin Festival) has brought him back to prominence.

It's essentially another love story, this time between a 15-year-old schoolboy (Johan, Widerberg's son) and a married schoolteacher 22 years older than him (Marika Lagercrantz). Such a subject is dangerous ground but Widerberg's honesty — the teacher has never been unfaithful to her salesman husband before but frankly can't resist the lure of "young skin" — pays dividends. He also secures fine performances from both leading players.

The film has none of the tormented guilt one might expect. It admits the teacher's lust, the boy's delight, and even the husband's acquiescence. Widerberg simply states, often very sensitively, that such things happen and sometimes no one is the worse for them.

Angry old man

THEATRE
Michael Billington

WE HAVE waited a long time to see David Rabe's 1984 Broadway hit, **Hurlyburly**, in London, and, in a sense, we're still waiting. A bomb-scare halted the opening night performance at the Old Vic shortly after ten o'clock. It was only the grit and tenacity of the actors that enabled the performance to continue, in the public square opposite the theatre. A spirit of wartime camaraderie suddenly emerged: when one of the actors understandably dried, a member of the audience thoughtfully tossed him her copy of the play.

It was hardly the ideal way to end a dense and demanding play: as Peter Hall said, it was a classic case of coitus interruptus. Yet the temporary crisis that attended the British premiere of Hurlyburly also reminded one that the play deals with a far more deep-seated malaise. Rabe, who achieved fame in the 1970s with a Vietnam trilogy much more potent than Oliver Stone's cinematic equivalent, is here dealing with the decay of civilisation. Rabe sees in modern America a cosmic despair.

The setting is Hollywood: the self-appointed dream factory of the world. And Rabe depicts a group of men, all involved in the industry, who lead lives of toxic desperation. Eddie, the pivotal figure, is a divorced casting director who constantly boozes, smokes and snorts. His head is as big a mess as his private life: he is having an affair with a fashion photographer, Darlene, whom he accuses of being attracted to his business partner, Mickey. But his biggest crisis concerns his unresolved love for an actor, Phil, who seethes with a violence mostly directed against women.

Objectively seen, Rabe's men are contemptible. They treat women as "broads" or "bitches": one transient Midwestern hiker is even passed around as if she were a household pet. They seem to exist off a daily diet of coke and pot. They live parasitically off a movie and television industry that they cynically despise. But the job of the dramatist, as Chekhov constantly insisted, is not to judge his characters but to be an unbiased witness. Rabe may not achieve quite that degree of holy detachment. He does, however, allow the actions of his characters to speak for themselves; and he sees in their inability to sustain any human relationship a tragic metaphor for social decay.

Rabe is unafraid to articulate the horror of living in a world without God. Eddie may be a querulous addict and he may abuse verbal syntax as much as his own body, but he has one speech in which he rages against the corruption of modern life. "The air's bad," he concludes, "the water's got poison in it and into whose eyes do we find ourselves staring when we look for Providence? We have emptied out the heavens and put oblivion in the hands of a bunch of ageing insurance salesmen whose jobs are insecure."

One has to admit that American drama, at its best, has a furious passion often denied our own. Rabe's play has an unyielding concern with the state of society and the ability to create universally resonant metaphors. American drama is often thought to be rooted in individual psychology; yet, at its finest, it allows public issues to grow naturally out of private dilemmas.

Hurlyburly may sprawl somewhat but it paints an unforgettable picture of a world, once described by George Steiner, in which the collapse of religious faith has created a vacuum "filled not by any rush of reason or tolerance but by psychological instability". And Rabe's characters could hardly be more unstable: Eddie turns a discussion with Darlene about where to eat into a form of neurotic accusation, and Phil's reaction, on being provided with an obliging date, is to throw her out of her own car.

The most stunning performance comes from Andy Serkis, who lends the muscular, tattooed, ponytailed Phil a terrifying sense of uncertainty that manifests itself in acts of random violence. You quiver with apprehension when he holds his baby in his arms.

Rupert Graves as Eddie also overcomes his inherent Englishness to play, with total conviction, a man who finds in drugs a consoling relief from the horrors of the world. And there is strong support from Daniel Craig as his despairing partner, Elizabeth McGovern as his tormented lover and Susannah Doyle as a balloon-dancer striving vainly for ordinary human contact. Out of its portrait of a group of anchorless men grows a poignant lament for civilisation.


Vile body . . . Rupert Graves as the coke-snorting Eddie

I can still recall the mixture of rarefied camp and genuine passion that Micheál MacLiammoir brought to his famous one-man show, **The Importance of Being Oscar**. But Simon Callow at the Savoy has taken over the original script and made it entirely his own. The result is a very eloquent re-telling of the Wilde saga, re-scored for baritone rather than tenor and shaded by a constant awareness of the ultimate tragedy.

It is good to be reminded of Wilde's early chutzpah in lecturing to Colorado miners about the Florentine Renaissance painters and Benvenuto Cellini. When Wilde informed the miners that the latter was dead, the instant response that came back was, "Who shot him?"

Callow, relaxed in a dark velvet suit, steers us through the familiar story with great skill and acts out extracts from the plays, poetry and prose with obvious relish: Dorian Gray is treated as an uncanny premonition of the encounter with Lord Alfred Douglas; Salome is rendered in rolling-vowelled French, and Lady Bracknell is evoked in all her imperious grandeur.

But Callow saves his really big effects for the second half: a pained and impassioned reading of Wilde's letter to Lord Alfred, De Profundis and a magnificently sombre account of The Ballad Of Reading Gaol. It is a highly impressive performance that gradually silenced the hackers and coughers who had come out in concerted force, and induced an enthralled attention.

Just keep your eye on the duck

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

AS SOON as you saw that **Animal Hospital** (BBC1) had moved to Aylesbury, you were waiting for the duck to drop. Madonna, the Aylesbury duck, appeared after several supporting acts (the disconsolate parrot, the anorexic rabbit, the sexually ambivalent python) had done their stuff. Were you, by the way, aware that a snake has two penises? This information deserved, I feel, a more uproarious reception than it got. Shauna Lowry's rather laid back "Uh-huh?" hardly seemed to cover the case. Surely it was more a case of "Wh.a.a.a.t!"

Peppy the python (who turned out to be a Poppy) eventually slouched off, leaving the stage to Madonna and her owner, Mrs Williams. Mrs Williams could have advertised in Variety as "Kindly, little white-haired old lady available for telling cameos. Own duck." Madonna had had cataracts. The vet said he'd never seen a blind duck before but I doubt if many blind ducks make it to the vet. Mrs Williams, however, often brings her ducks in. She has 18.

The removal of one cataract is generally considered adequate for an animal but Mrs Williams insisted on two. One-eyed ducks probably swim in circles. The recovering patient needs round-the-clock care and usually wears an Elizabethan collar. You could have sold tickets. It cost Mrs Williams £500.

"She's always been a good duck," she said. "It was well worthwhile because I couldn't live without them. I get it from my granny." Love, that is, not money.

There is a tendency to tinker with a winning formula: one third pet, one third owner and one third Rolf ("Gidday!"). The Harmsworth Hospital, which returns in the autumn, was largely a small pet practice. I do miss that waiting room full of owners pretending not to notice the camera. The Hampden Hospital is far more rural and, frankly, watching a calf being ratcheted out of a cow makes my eyes water.

The Greenwich Foot Tunnel is slightly spooky. It runs under the Thames from the Isle of Dogs to Greenwich and P D James found it so terrifying that she would not walk through it. One of the women in **Original Sin** (ITV) shared that horror: "So dark and sloping. I was sure the water would break in and we would drown."

It is very evocative, the more so because it is so neglected. The white tiles are cracked, the stone flags worn, the notices forbid spitting but the Victorian engineering is still triumphant. Film-makers love it.

The Thames flows through Original Sin, a three-part Inspector Dalgliesh story. It is set in a publishing house on the river. A soaring Venetian façade, snowy staircases and chandeliers like those pulsating jellyfish that illuminate the deep sea. The place takes your breath away and rather too literally. Part one starts with a suicide and ends with a murder. Fortunately, the solution is almost incidental. P D James is a great cut-and-come-again cake full of dangerous currents.

I noticed that the family, coming home groaning the way they do, started to smile when they heard the soundtrack of **3rd Rock From The Sun**. A rogue alien with rather Teutonic tendencies has arrived on earth and taken command of Tom, Dick and Harry ("You will all be known as Tommy"). This gives John Lithgow the chance to play both a gentle, dithering Dick and a hard, dominant Dick. Oddly, or not, it's the latter who is catnip to women.

Midnight memories

MUSIC
Robin Denselow

THE omens were not good. A darkened stage, a delay, and the arrival of a man in dark black suit and tie looking like an Atlanta lawyer. It was the legendary Bubba Knight, elder brother of Gladys and for decades a member of her backing singers, the Pips.

"Sit back," he told her London audience, sounding as if he had done it a thousand times before. "Relax; enjoy this ride on the Midnight Train to Georgia."

And just as one began to fear the worst, a night of classic pop music transformed to cabaret and nostalgia, on bounced Gladys herself in glittering top and long black skirt, already talking her head off, dancing, enthusing wildly and delightfully uncool. No, it was not going to be cabaret; more like a nineties update of a Motown revue.

Her show had been billed, rather worryingly, as a "greatest hit tour", which made it sound like a sad final attempt to cash in at the end of a career.

But Gladys Knight is nowhere near finished. She may have been performing for the best part of four decades now, but she is still only 52, a mere spring chicken by Gospel standards, and she has survived so far by constantly changing her approach to suit different markets while always relying on her gloriously emotive, soulful voice.

She has had a long, patchy but splendid musical history, and has always maintained her sense of identity. Her remarkable career started in a Gospel choir in her local Baptist church in Atlanta and took shape once she joined her brother and cousins, the Pips, singing at a birthday party. They went on to play the club circuit, changing from fifties doo-wap to sixties R & B and notching up their first hit 36 years ago with the Johnny Otis song, Every Beat Of My Heart.

It was her second song at the Albert Hall, and she made it sound as fresh as if it had just been written.

In the mid-sixties she and the Pips signed to Motown, and were established as contenders with their version of I Heard It Through The Grapevine.

It reappeared too, sounding rousing as ever, but stuck in the midst of a slushy medley that started with, of all things, The Way We Were.

Gladys was never the perfect Motown star, as far as Motown was concerned, for she never tried to compete with Diana Ross in the glamour stakes. She was, as now, too earthy and too funny.

Musically, too, she went her own way, giving Kristofferson's slushy country ballad, Help Me Make It Through The Night, a soulful once-over. When it reappeared at this Royal Albert Hall concert it was performed with extraordinary sensuality for an old favourite that she has now been tackling for a quarter of a century.

The cabaret circuit has not destroyed her; she is still unique.

Robin Hood in reverse

Larry Elliott

Masters of Illusion: The World Bank and the Poverty of Nations
by Catherine Caufield
Macmillan 432pp £20

AS THE Allied armies consolidated their bridgehead in Normandy in June 1944, the Queen Mary was churning its way through the North Atlantic to the United States. On board the liner was John Maynard Keynes, accompanied by a clutch of senior European economists, en route to the New Hampshire ski resort of Bretton Woods. The crossing was not wasted. Keynes put his brilliant mind to work on redrafting an American plan for a World Bank, a multilateral body that would make loans to governments.

As Catherine Caufield's book illustrates, it was just the first of many revampings of the Bank in its first 50 years. Even then, the organisation was beset by the criticism that has dogged it to this day. One American at the time accused Keynes of being "a brilliant exponent of the project of substituting economic imperialism for political imperialism"; precisely the charge thrown at the Bank by the left in the 1970s and 1980s.

Caufield's book is pacy and well-written. If at times it seems a little too obsessed with the minutiae of the Bank's lending, in the end the approach works because the 400-plus pages relentlessly build up a picture of an organisation not just guilty of reckless lending but riddled with structural flaws.

She saves the best for last, summing up the Bank's history thus: "The past half-century of development has not profited the poorest people, nor the poorest countries. Rather they have paid dearly — and their descendants will continue to pay dearly — for the disproportionately small benefits they have received. Development in the monopolistic, formulaic, foreign-dominated arrogant and failed form that we have known is largely a matter of poor people in rich countries giving money to rich people in poor countries." Along the way there is much, much more of this. There is, for example, a well-documented attack on the Bank's insufferable élitism — a feature of Keynes and Keynesianism — based on the assumption that a Western model of massive infrastructure investment designed by Westerners was what every developing nation needed.

The Bank has recently learnt a little humility, a sense that native populations might have views on how their societies should develop. But for far too long it believed in Keynes's dictum that "it is most dangerous that the people should, under normal conditions, be in a position to put into effect their transient will and their uncertain judgment on every question of policy that occurs".

It would not have mattered had the results of the Bank's lending been less baleful. But from the dam-building mania of the 1950s and 1960s to the debt crisis and the destruction of swathes of the Amazon rainforest in the 1980s, the emphasis was on ever-higher levels of lending rather than on an ability to repay the debts or the social and environmental consequences of the loans.

The one weakness of Caufield's book is that having built up her case against the Bank and all its works, she leaves the obvious question of whether the Bank should be scrapped hanging in the air. This is a dilemma faced by the entire aid agency community, which for all its criticism sees the Bank as redeemable. Better to have the Bank as the world's leading development body and try to change its lending policies than leave the field open for an unfettered private sector.

James Wolfensohn, the Bank's current president, is certainly doing his best to find common ground with the aid agencies. While he has yet to get to grips with the bloated bureaucracy, he has at least made sure that his lavishly paid staff delve deeper into developing countries than a seminar with government officials at the airport Hilton.

Moreover Wolfensohn's decision to cancel lending for the Arun dam in Nepal marks a welcome shift in the Bank's philosophy of lending away from big-ticket projects and into health, education and smaller-scale water supply.

Whether this will save it from becoming a glorified global management consultancy servicing the private sector remains to be seen. But having been a slavish devotee of just about every fad going, the Bank at last seems to have recognised that trickle up is better than trickle down. And that's all to the good.

Crime

Lucretia Stewart

Hornet's Nest, by Patricia Cornwell (Little, Brown, £16.99)

THANKS in part to her talent and in part to her highly efficient PR machine, Patricia Cornwell is now so massively successful that even doggerel scribbled on lavatory paper would sell like hot cakes. And though Hornet's Nest is really no good, I doubt that the scales would fall from these Cornwell worshippers' eyes. The cool, compassionate composure which characterises Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta novels is notably absent here. Instead, lines like "She was unkind and unattractive to him" pad out this limp account of a reporter obsessed by police work accompanying Deputy Chief Virginia West about her business. It may well be that Cornwell felt the need to take a break from the bleak world which Scarpetta, a grim forensic pathologist, inhabits, but this "lighter entertainment" has nothing to recommend it.

Hot Poppies, by Reggie Nadelson (Faber, £14.99)

TERRIFIC mystery set in New York and Hong Kong and featuring Artie Cohen, the detective every woman would like to find in her bed. But Lily Hanes, Artie's red-haired girlfriend, got there first. There are a number of story lines: the mysterious death of a Chinese girl; Lily's desire for a baby; a new kind of bad-news heroin; a terrible fire in a sweatshop. All link together and lead not to Rome but to Hong Kong, where Artie, Lily and a host of other minor characters, find themselves caught up in a pro-democracy demonstration. Nadelson manages the meshing of all these different strands brilliantly, leading to a beautifully satisfying ending.

Red Leaves, by Paullina Simons (Flamingo, £16.99)

SHADES of Donna Tartt's The Secret History in this New England college campus mystery. Beautiful Kristina is found dead in the snow by a young detective, Spencer O'Malley, who had had a date with her, which she won't now be able to keep. Her closest friends don't really have satisfactory explanations for their apparent failure to notice that she was missing. O'Malley's obsession with the dead girl leads him eventually to discover the truth but it's a long, slow business and the denouement, when it finally comes, doesn't quite add up.

A Likeness In Stone, by J Wallis Martin (Hodder, £16.99)

IT'S only at the end of this chilling first novel that the title becomes explicable. Twenty years after her death, the body of beautiful Helena Warner is found in a cupboard in a house at the bottom of a reservoir. Why should anyone have wanted to kill her? And why are her three closest friends colluding to conceal the identity of the murderer. Absorbing and genuinely surprising.

Bombay pluck

James Wood

Love and Longing In Bombay
by Vikram Chandra
Faber 272pp £12.99

THESE days short stories are highly self-conscious contracts, tiresomely concerned with what they are artfully concealing: the small print of literary "significance". Such stories — the American influence predominates — are vivid little feats, dry marvels of control and form. Like Tantalus's torture, they delight in withholding from us their satisfactions. They are stripped, crafty and dour. Artistically, they make no mistakes. But they also forget to be alive.

Vikram Chandra's stories have nothing to do with this tradition. This book of five connected tales is full and free and utterly alive, confidently crossing and recrossing contemporary Bombay. These stories are not, in the contemporary Anglo-American mode, temples to the symbol, or museums of the one resonant image that controls meaning. They have a gorgeous elasticity, and an absolute naturalness. All the powers of storytelling that distinguished Chandra's first novel, Red Earth And Pouring Rain, are mashed into a book half the size.

Without self-consciousness, Chandra uses a Marlowe-like narrator, called Subramaniam, to tell all five stories. Subramaniam calls his listeners to a Bombay bar, the Fisherman's Rest, and over the course of the book, tells us his five tales.

Conceived orally, they are liberated from "literariness" and purl like stories should. In the first, "Dharma", a distinguished soldier, Jago Antia, goes back to his family home. The family's faithful retainer, who has stayed on, tells him that the family house is haunted. Jago, in his brisk way, will have none of it. But the house is indeed haunted, by the spirit of Jago's dead brother, killed as a little boy. Jago is visited by unhappy memories. His life, until now, has been a triumph of repression. The story tenderly follows his emotional dissolution.

One of the apparent advantages of Indian writing is that, like the police or a virus, it can cover all of society. This seems to be one of the lost capacities of British writing. Even in this small book, Chandra's writing goes everywhere, like a Victorian detective. In his story "Shakti", he offers the spectacle of the nouveau riche Sheila Bijlani, and her struggle to rise to the top of Bombay society. To do this, she must fight and conquer the true Bombay aristocrat, Dolly Boatwalla, who has a "level of careless imperfection" that Sheila will never attain.

Sheila's Bombay is a city of ladies' lunch clubs, where people tell mean stories about their social inferiors: "She laughed at a story about a Punjabi woman at the club who pronounced 'pizza' the way it was written and who dressed her daughters in too much gold." It is a funny fable, and might be no more than hygienic satire were it not for Chandra's portrait of Sheila's servant, Ganga.

The story follows Ganga home to her shack of tin and wood far from Sheila's fancy Malabar Hill house: "[Ganga] worked, as nearly as Sheila could tell, in another dozen houses up and down the hill, and she sped from one to another without a pause: the entire day, after which she stood in a local train for an hour and fifteen minutes to get out to Andheri, where she lived. It had taken Sheila six months to get her to eat lunch, which she did squatting in a corner of the kitchen and holding a plate directly in front of her face for greater efficiency." One notes the precision here — the train that takes "an hour and fifteen minutes", and the plate held "directly in front of her face for greater efficiency". This is a writer who sees things, and then resists the false poetry of congratulating his own powers of vision.


Bombay rush hour . . . joining the great narrative of the city

In "Kama", Chandra confidently enters the world of Bombay crime through his protagonist, Sartaj Singh, a Sikh policeman. Again, this is a marvellously full story, moving between Sartaj's own divorce and the troubled marriage (which has ended in murder) that is the subject of his inquiry. Chandra has no desire to grease his forms into conclusions, or even into artfully unconcluded conclusion (the kind we know from Carver: "He knew things were about to change in his life"). Instead, there is a Chekhovian determination to state the truth...

At the end of "Kama", Sartaj has not solved the murder case that has preoccupied him; but he has finally signed his divorce papers. At the end of "Dharma", Jago Antia has faced his ghosts, but "He knew that nothing had changed. He knew he was still and for ever Jago Antia . . ."

The book, perhaps, has a deep sense of form which has something to do with Hindu ideas of death and regeneration: thus, we encounter stories called, in effect, "dharma" and "karma"; and the book's last story is called "Shanti" (or "Shantih", meaning deep peace) and involves a man called "Shiv" (or Shiva, the god associated with love, peace and reproduction).

But these allusions can be taken or left. It is remarkable to read a book in which so little is forced, nothing pursed, pomposities not imposed, elegances not fondled. And this is not a merely negative triumph. These stories offer a world. They have the fronded, trailing carelessness that is never truly careless, and comes from being dragged across actual lives.

If you would like a copy of this book at a special discount price of £8.99 contact Books @ Guardian Weekly

Slave to industrial growth

Darcus Howe

The Making of New World Slavery
by Robin Blackburn
Verso 602pp £25

THE subtitle of this remarkable history of slavery is "From the Baroque to the Modern 1492-1800". The author sets out his stall at once. The exuberance, the extravagance, perhaps the liberalism of ancient slavery has to be differentiated in scale, and economic and social discipline, from African slavery in the New World. The latter ushers into being the modern social and political economy of the triangle: Africa, Europe, the Americas.

Blackburn's scholarship flows sweetly from his intellectual predecessors — C L R James and Dr Eric Williams. Both were Caribbean intellectuals who, in the fret and fever of anti-colonial politics, laid the ideological and historical foundation of Caribbean life and society.

In 1938, a massive social explosion challenged colonial authority in the Caribbean. Descendants of slaves from British Guiana to Jamaica formed trade unions and mass democratic labour parties that exist to this day. James intervened with his historical record of the only successful slave revolt in history. And he tells us what motivated him. "I was tired of reading and hearing about Africans being persecuted and oppressed in Africa, in the Middle Passage, in the US and all over the Caribbean. I made up my mind that I would write a book in which Africans or people of African descent, instead of consistently being the object of other people's exploitation and ferocity, would themselves be taking action on a grand historical scale and shaping other people to their needs."

This was not a vulgar nationalist tract. Slave production was at the core of an international system of production and exchange, drawing into its web many more than African slaves. James, the Marxist historian, linked the rise of the revolutionary slavery of Santo Domingo (Haiti) to the French proletariat on the road to *liberté*, *egalité* and *fraternité*.

Four years later, an ex-student of James at one of the Caribbean's leading grammar schools was preparing his PhD thesis. James held his hand and led him to the subject of slavery. It was an original work eventually published under the title Capitalism And Slavery. Eric Williams stripped slavery of moral opprobrium and placed it at the heart of modern production. It was the economic system of the time, the birth of mass production, distribution, consumerism and profiteering, which laid the basis of the industrial revolution and the birth of a proletariat in Europe.

He added that the abolition of slavery was not the consequence of liberal morality. The system became uneconomic as a method of production, always a moment that ushers in mass revolt. Clarkson, Wilberforce and others were marginal to this fundamental fact.

They were revolutionary documents of the day. Their detractors have not stood the test of time. James in his foreword to The Black Jacobins expressed his desire that "other people [would] enter the lists and go further than I was able to go". Robin Blackburn has taken up the gauntlet.

Blackburn opened his account with The Overthrow Of Colonial Slavery. He is perhaps one of the only historians of European stock to approach slavery not as an apologia of European barbarism. This book was published 10 years ago and identified the radical forces in Europe and the Americas that led to the demise of slavery in the British, French and Spanish empires. Now The Making Of New World Slavery describes the economic basis of the institution.

He begins by making a clear demarcation between ancient slavery and its modern version, which created the New World. "The slavery of the Ancient World would have been far more diversified both in pattern and employment, and in its ethnic composition, with Greek slave tutors, Egyptian slave administrators, English slave servants, German slave labourers." New World slavery, he tells us, was modern and bore a remarkable resemblance to how capitalism conducts itself today. People separated by oceans were brought into objective relationships with each other. Tax systems, racial justification for exploitation, wage labour, sophisticated commerce, the press all had their origins in the slave plantation.

BLACKBURN then follows directly in the footsteps of Dr Williams. He is uninhibited in the charge that the capital accumulated on the plantations of the Caribbean and on the back of African slaves financed the early Industrial Revolution.

Blackburn extends the work of Williams and James in a specific way. He insists that the vast activities of the planter were the products of civil society independent of the state. It is a huge point to make and he finds an ally in that towering historical figure, Frederick Douglas: "[The] plantation is a little world of its own, having its own language, its own ruler, regulations and customs. The troubles arising here are not settled by the civil power of the state."

Once the plantation became a growing concern the state sauntered in, buccaneer-style, and raised revenue on their trade. The features of modern mass production are there for all to see. The plantation of yesteryear has become the industrial plant of today. Mass production involving hundreds of workers in common purpose to produce a single commodity began on the plantations in the Caribbean. The proletariat as we know it originated there.

The figures reveal the scale of the workforce. "The acquisition of some 12 million captives on the coast of Africa between 1500 and 1870 helped make possible the construction of one of the largest systems of slavery in human history." By 1800 there were 600,000 slaves in the British West Indies, 150,000 slaves in the colonies occupied by Britain, 857,000 slaves in the US, about 1.5 million in Brazil and around 200,000 in Spanish America. Blackburn is unrelenting in his task of showing the centrality to modern Britain of slavery and the empire.

Britain acquired the produce of around 1 million slaves, each working for an average of 2,000 to 3,000 hours a year and producing crops worth around £18. To assemble such a vast organisation of human activity was an immense feat. What we see around us today, the link between Hong Kong and London, between the City and Singapore, between Bradford and Bangladesh, was mapped out in the process of plantation slavery.

This book has finally drawn back the veil that concealed the history and development of modern society. This book is essential reading not merely for academics, but for journalists, dramatists and students. Like Caliban, Blackburn has pioneered regions Caesar never knew.

Death waiting in the wings

Tim Radford

Sex And The Origins Of Death
by William R Clark
Oxford 190pp £16.99

SOME things seem to stave off death. When the Grim Reaper wanders by, certain bacteria are already playing dead, but so convincingly that it isn't clear that they are in any way alive.

When the going gets tough, and multiplication by division doesn't seem to do the trick, bacteria spore. Rather than starve, they shut down. The cellular mechanisms go through a little instruction routine and then one daughter bacterium wraps herself around the other to help transition into a death-like state: the two of them make a thick chemical coat or coffin-case to protect the sporulating bacteria from damage — by radiation, toxin, or a stake through the heart, that sort of thing.

Water drains out, a trehalose sugar is manufactured to replace it; food is prepared as a kind of pre-packed resurrection breakfast, and the bacterium becomes, says William R Clark "like a city with no people in it". The DNA is curled up into a tight, safe little ball.

The creature can stay dead to the world for 50 or 100 years. Or a lot longer: thousands, even millions of years, if recent research holds up.

And the death is pretty convincing. Some spores have been heated beyond 100C, and cooled to minus 270C. At minus 270C, on the edge of absolute zero, the atoms in the proteins and nucleic acids have stopped vibrating.

Whatever controls life and resurrection must lie, Clark points out, in the geometry of the proteins and acids prepared by the bacterium as it pulls the coverlet over its face and goes into its coma. But even so, even though there is nothing going on at all, somehow the spore knows about life outside, because when conditions improve — when food and water and warmth return — it quickens; it returns from the dead.

Actually, some spores don't, which raises another question. What strange line between life and death is crossed by the spores that don't survive, asks Clark. When we know the answer, we might begin to work out what death really is.

Bacteria aim for immortality: cryptobiosis is their shield against the only end they know — accidental death. Sex is part of the story of life and death for other, bigger single-celled beasts: it can be observed in hairy ciliated eukaryotes called paramecia. They divide and multiply but after a while senescence sets in anyway. Paramecia get round death by abandoning fission and going in for sex, sometimes with itself, more often with other paramecia. This act somehow resets life's clock.

Clark, an immunologist at the University of Los Angeles, begins with and keeps coming back to single cells: a human is really just a eukaryote composed of 100 million million cells, and death — however you define it — is first and last a matter of cell death.

The advent of life support machines makes definition a problem: a person can be dead to the world and yet function fully with a little help from tubes. And yet, when the machine is switched off, death happens. It takes time. It happens in stages. But there is a point beyond which death is final, and palpable.

The exit, as described by Clark in this wonderful little book, of an adult male victim of a heart attack who got swift, but not swift enough, treatment by the advanced cardiac life support unit, makes extraordinary reading.

The strangest thing of all is that just reading about the end we all must face leaves one in rather good heart: a bit like a murder story with a happy ending.

Chess Leonard Barden

*B*OBBY FISCHER fans will enjoy Russians Versus Fischer, a book which includes previously secret documents about the battle for the world title between the massed Soviet GMs and the eccentric lone American. Published in Moscow in 1994 but new to Britain, it includes 148 games from 1958-92 between Fischer and the Russians, Soviet GMs' analyses of Fischer's play and personality, and minutes of the anguished meetings of the Soviet leadership as Fischer demolished his rivals between 1970 and 1972.

Most people believe that Fischer's paranoia about all things Russian dates from the 1962 candidates, but GM Yuri Averbakh's foreword pinpoints a much earlier incident. Fischer's mother, a pre-1939 Moscow medical student, wrote to Krushchev asking that her son be invited to Moscow. The 15-year-old US champion expected to meet world champion Botvinnik at the Central Chess Club, but had to defeat some young masters at blitz chess before officials summoned the future champion Petrosian, the best quick player in Moscow.

Fischer was then rude to his interpreter and left Moscow early in a huff. Some years later, GM Vasyukov, one of the defeated blitzers, asked Fischer if he could recall their score. "I'll tell you the moves," replied Fischer, and recited an entire French Defence.

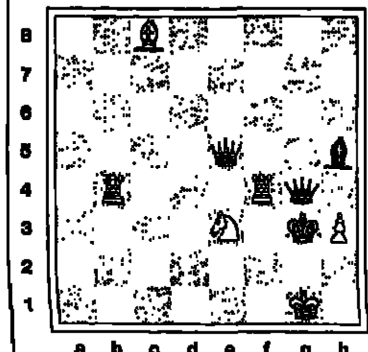
At the meeting after Taimanov's 0-6 defeat, Baturinsky (head of the chess body) opened with the chilling remark, "This is not just a show trial," and asked, if instead of three GMs to help Taimanov, "it would have been useful to send a physician". "A sexologist?" interrupted Spassky. Baturinsky maintained that Fischer was always much stronger when he got his way in offboard arguments, and that the way to stop him was to refuse special concessions. Later, at Reykjavik, Spassky nobly allowed Fischer back to play game three after the American defaulted game two, but his psychological harmony was broken by the episode.

There were meetings to decide whether Korchnoi should lose to Petrosian in the candidates semi-final or vice versa, meetings to veto a 1977 Fischer v Karpov match, and meetings to censure Spassky for losing in Reykjavik. One vivid cameo is at Mar del Plata 1960, where Fischer had just lost to Spassky's King's Gambit and was crying in his room. "Why are you crying?" asked Bronstein. "Don't cry. Just because of one game? I was made to lose a world championship match to Botvinnik, and I didn't cry."

The book's specious theories for Fischer's failure at Buenos Aires 1960 omit the likely cause: he'd been introduced to sex, with the encouragement of Larry Evans, who wanted to finish ahead of him. Asked how it was, he replied, "Nothing special, just jumping up and down."

Chess & Bridge, 369 Euston Road, London NW1 3AR (0171-388 2404) is offering Russians Versus Fischer (normal price £16) at £14 post free to Guardian Weekly readers (£16 post free outside the UK).

No 2466



White mates in two moves against any defence (by GB Spencer).

No 2465: 1 Rh6. If Kf5 2 Bf3 Kf4 3 Rf6. If Kg4 2 Be4 Kf4 3 Rh4.

Steppe dances in the spring

Mark Cocker

*O*NE COULD almost believe that one lone region of southern Portugal existed in isolation from the general pattern of European climates. While the rest of the continent seemed to be slowly emerging from winter, the Alentejo was uniquely bathed in summer sunshine. The wind was hot and sluggish as it rolled over the undulating grasslands. Butterflies drifted in abundance among banks of wild lavender, where the heady scent found its audible equivalent in the luxurious drone of honey bees.

But then three March hares betrayed the real season. They skirted my perch on a large boulder, unseeing or unconcerned as they rollicked across a field of young wheat, six black-tipped ears jostling above its green horizon.

Momentarily, a head and forelimbs would shoot into view as one hare sought advantage by climbing on his rival. Gradually, they moved off, and their low grunting noises — rather like a boxer taking body blows — submerged beneath the other sounds of spring.

In the middle distance quail sang from dense cover. Beyond, a red-legged partridge and a hoopoe stood on rocks facing each other and calling as if in duet. The hoopoe's song was a soft bottle-blown hoot, while the partridge delivered a harsh and explosive "chukk-aa". Further still were the birds we had come to see and whose presence seemed to define the place itself. For the Alentejo has long been known as bustard country.

In Europe there are two species of these long-legged, steppe-loving creatures. The great bustard is famous as the world's largest flighted land bird, the males weighing up to 18kg. It is also on a list of the planet's most threatened species, despite a wide, if fragmented, range from Mongolia to Portugal. In all this massive territory the Iberian steppes are its most important refuge, holding roughly half the world total of 28,000. In the Alentejo they are at their south-western limit and we saw just two eyeing us from a hilltop redoubt. When we tried to move closer they walked steadily away with their heads tilted skywards, regal and unassailable, until they broke the horizon and vanished.

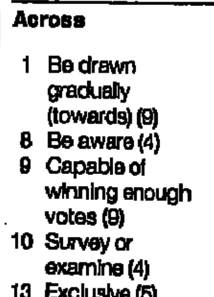
The little bustard lacks both its relative's imposing size and the dubious glamour of extreme rarity, having a population at least four times greater. Yet it has itself declined sharply throughout most of its European range because of the almost universal destruction of grassland habitats. Only where intensification was delayed, as on the plains of central Spain and Portugal, did they continue to thrive.

However, the entry of these two states into the European Union and their implementation of major agricultural "improvements" have ended the bird's Iberian security. Even so, with more than half the world's population concentrated there, little bustards are still common in parts of both countries.

The males, dandies with a double necklace of white defining a broad black ruff, were conspicuous as they paraded their territories and displayed for a mate. Stalking forward with almost mechanical stiffness, a bird would then halt, dip its bill into its chest and, with the black ruff inflated, throw the head back in a sudden upward convulsion, emitting a short, irreverent snort as it did so. Occasionally, a bird capped this vocal performance with a ritualised display flight, when the broad white wings made it instantly visible. And as one bustard "burped", so rivals seemed forced to blurt out a response. It was a deeply comic, deeply bathetic sound from such an impressive bird, but much pleasure it gave as it hiccuped around these folded plains — the Alentejo is still perfect bustard country.

ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

Quick crossword no. 360



Across

1 Be drawn gradually (towards) (9)
8 Be aware (4)
9 Capable of winning enough votes (9)
10 Survey or examine (4)
13 Exclusive (5)
15 Beginner (6)
16 Altogether (6)
17 Continent (6)
19 Port in Mass. (6)
20 Take possession of (region) (5)
21 Exhibit(ion) (4)
24 Norfolk town (5,4)
25 Stopper (4)
26 Nether garments (9)

Down

2 Regulation (4)
3 Depraved habit (4)
4 Sleep-like state (6)
5 Candle wax (6)
6 Inject an antigen into (9)
7 Age of majority, formerly (6-3)
11 Run through or across each other (9)
12 Off the boat (9)
13,22 Naval base in the Orkneys (5,4)
14 Flower (sounds like sheep!) (5)
18 Flag (6)
19 Hound (6)
22 See 13 down
23 Ancient Peruvian (4)

Last week's solution

PALMSUNDAY
NURTURE TRAMP
TREK SEMOLINA
TAIWAN SATEEN
HANDBOOK DIVA
SOBER SPINDLE
PENALTYBOX

Bridge Zia Mahmood

"*W*ILL IT be Zia again?" asked the Daily Bulletin halfway through the Cap Gemini World Top Tournament at the Hague this year. Though Bobby Levin and I were leading at that stage, the answer was a resounding no, for the competition we faced from 15 of the world's best pairs was so fierce that we finished no more than halfway up the field.

The slide started with this deal from our match against Geir Helgemo and Tor Helness of Norway. Look at the problems that both of us faced. First, take my partner's hand as North at game all:

♠Q542 ♥7 ♦AJ102 ♣K983

South	West	North	East
Zia	H'gmo	Levin	H'ness
			3♥
3♠	5♥	?	

Three hearts is natural and preemptive, as is five hearts. Three spades is also natural, and shows whatever values you think I might have for a three-level overcall. Would you place your money on five spades, double, or pass? Pass would be far too cautious. Double is the conservative action, but Levin bid five spades. The penalty from five hearts doubled will not be more than 500 and you may easily collect only 200 against a vulnerable game.

If you passed or doubled, your problems are over, for you will collect 200 or 500 respectively. If you bid five spades, though, the problem becomes your partner's — and since you put me in this spot, you can move around the table and play the hand:

North
♠ Q542
♥ 7
♦ AJ102
♣ K983

South
♠ KJ9863
♥ 6
♦ K93
♣ A74

West, Helgemo, leads the queen of hearts, playing standard leads and marking Helness with the ace and king of the suit. When the queen of hearts holds the first trick, West switches to the ace of spades, then the ten of spades. East follows to the first spade and discards a heart on the second. You have lost two aces already and cannot afford another loser. The trouble is that you have a losing club in your hand, so you must establish a diamond winner in dummy on which to throw it. You have enough in diamonds to play either opponent for the queen — but which is it to be? When you've made up your mind, look at the East-West hands:

West	East
♠ A 10	♠ 7
♥ QJ853	♥ AK10942
♦ 64	♦ Q875
♣ QJ62	♣ 105

To make the contract, I had to win the second round of spades in dummy and run the jack of diamonds. I could repeat the finesse against East's queen, and later discard my losing club. But do you think I would be writing column if I had?

Helgemo's jump to five hearts had put us under pressure, and we lost a vast swing. If he had bid only four hearts, however, Levin would have got his hand off his chest with four spades, and then both of us would have doubled five hearts and taken our sure plus score.

The lesson is: when you know you're going to sacrifice at the five level, go there at once so as to make life hard for the enemy.

Football

Victory in a pointless exercise

David Lacey

THE Americans call friendlies exhibition matches. As exhibitions go, last Saturday's feeble farrago between England and Mexico was about as memorable as an illustrated lecture on sisal.

Nevertheless several interested parties gleaned satisfaction from it. Robbie Fowler scored his first international goal, Nicky Butt gained his first cap and Paul Ince won his first game as captain.

Glenn Hoddle learned all manner of useful things from the evening, or so he said, and David James at last discovered where his near post was by colliding with it. The manager of Manchester United, Alex Ferguson, rested content in the knowledge that while six of his players had been called up at various times only one, Butt, took part in the game, and even he appeared for a mere 21 minutes.

The crowd enjoyed itself, which was just as well since there was not much else to enjoy. The high pitch of the support suggested that a fair proportion of them had been attracted by the thought that the Spice Girls might be singing the National Anthem.

Johnny Haynes was guest of honour. Many a teeny-bopper must have wondered what this middle-aged stranger was doing breathing the same evening air as Batty and Keown, like he was somebody. In fact the longer the game went on the more it cried out for Haynes to step down from the Royal Box and show England how to pass.

England won the game with a goal in each half. After 20 minutes Pardo, having legitimately intercepted Sheringham, then caught Ince's heel. Sheringham's penalty sent Rios the wrong way, whereupon the game lost much of what little point it had when the Tottenham forward, dazed by an earlier elbow to the temple, was forced to go off.

The prospect of a burgeoning partnership between Sheringham and Fowler, given the fruitfulness during Euro 96 of Sheringham and Shearer, had been an intriguing one. The pairing of Wright with Fowler would appear to have less of a future although it did produce England's best moment.

Ten minutes into the second half one of several centres of quality from Le Saux on the left found Wright coming away from a defender at the far post before heading the ball back firmly towards the far corner of the net. Rios kept it out with an agile one-handed save but Fowler nodded in the rebound.

Robert Lee, England's best player on the night, albeit as a stop-gap right wing-back, made the telling point that the ball was given away far too often and even Hoddle admitted that "we didn't keep the ball after we went 2-0 up".

Maybe in a World Cup qualifier England will concentrate harder on this aspect of their game. But the lack of players able to pass imaginatively or take on opponents is alarming.

Hoddle had a good word for everybody afterwards. The England coach sounded like the director of an amateur production of the Desert Song who does not want to upset an off-key Red Shadow. But next time he will need better luck with his casting.

Rowing Oxford v Cambridge Boat Race



Neck and neck . . . the Light Blues stay well in contention at Hammersmith Bridge PHOTO: TOM JENKINS

Cambridge are kings of the river

Christopher Dodd

CAMBRIDGE's tenacious and brilliant rowing earned them their fifth successive victory in the 143rd Boat Race last Saturday. They accepted the Beefeater Gin Trophy from the four-times Olympic champion Steve Redgrave and sent Oxford scurrying back to the drawing board.

Ed Bellamy, Oxford's president who lost to Goldie aboard Isis half an hour before the Boat Race, then had to watch the crew from which he had been dropped rowed down on the long Surrey Bend. "To turn round from a run of defeats you've got to be a number of lengths quicker than the other crew from a psychological point of view," he said. "As the race went, maybe that's what started to slip away, that Oxford hadn't done it for a number of years and here we go again."

This was the end of a three-year contract in which Daniel Topolski was brought back as director of coaching to turn Oxford round after his departure following the 1987 mutiny. His weapon this time was the Dutch Olympic coach René Mijnders, who injected a wonderful spirit in the club and turned out a superb crew, stroked by Tim Foster, late of Britain's Olympic four.

"Both crews did an excellent job," Mijnders said. "The further the race, the better Cambridge started to row. It was very high quality."

Winning the toss, Oxford chose the Surrey station. They were very quick off the mark and a quarter-length up in no time. Cambridge came almost level before Oxford stretched their lead to a length around Barn Elms after half a mile, only to lose it all at the Mile, where both crews were clocked at 3.51. An Oxford push at Harrods gained hardly anything and they were only a quarter of a length ahead at Hammersmith Bridge.

Cambridge began to make up ground at St Paul's School and really hit their stride on the outside of the long Surrey Bend, arriving at Chiswick Steps level. Oxford never flinched but now Cambridge were romping home, opening clear water before Barnes Bridge and extending their 4-sec advantage there to six at the finish.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Scotland at the four-front of their group

TOMMY BOYD was the toast of Scotland as they opened up a four-point lead in Group Four with a 2-0 victory over Estonia in their World Cup qualifying match at Rugby Park, Kilmarnock. Boyd, who had failed to find the net in 42 previous appearances for his country, finally put his name on the scoresheet in the 25th minute, after an earlier effort had been blocked by the Estonian goalkeeper Mart Poom.

Boyd was involved in Scotland's second when he hit the bar and, under pressure from Kevin Gallacher, Janek Meet volleyed the ball into his own net. The visitors had their moments but were unable to turn their chances into goals.

Although, statistically, Wales can still qualify for the finals, in reality their campaign breathed its last when they were beaten 2-1 by an exciting Belgian side in Cardiff. Bertrand Crasson put them ahead with a 25-yard shot and Lorenzo Staelens doubled the lead just before half-time with a header. Gary Speed reduced the deficit with a third of the match remaining.

Meanwhile, Northern Ireland had to be content with a point from their game with Portugal, the leaders of Group Nine, which ended in a goalless draw in Belfast. The home side were impressive in the early stages but the visitors came storming back after half-time. The draw moved Northern Ireland no nearer automatic qualification, but it added to their confidence and respectability.

LIVERPOOL striker Robbie Fowler was saint and sinner in the eyes of European football's governing body Uefa, all within the space of five days. First he was fined £900 for displaying a "political" T-shirt during his side's match with Brann Bergen in the European Cup Winners' Cup. Then, the Anfield star received a fax from Fifa's general secretary, Sepp Blatter, congratulating him on his sportsmanship in trying to persuade a referee not to give a penalty in his favour in the match with Arsenal.

JOE ROYLE resigned as manager of Everton, 28 months after returning to the club he had served with distinction as a player. Six months after succeeding the sacked Mike Walker he led the Merseyside club to the 1995 FA Cup. But things have gone wrong since then, with the club racked by disharmony, disagreements and rank under-achievement. Royle is expected to receive a golden handshake of up to £500,000.

INDIA snatched defeat from the jaws of victory in Bridgetown, Barbados, after beginning the fourth day of the third Test against West Indies needing only 120 to win. However, the home side's pace attack completely overwhelmed the visitors on a lively Kensington Oval pitch, to give Brian Lara's side a 1-0 lead in the five-match series.

In Port Elizabeth, Mark Waugh's undefeated 115 helped Australia record a seven-wicket victory over South Africa, to level the seven-match series at one apiece.

SWISS football referee Kurt Rothlisberger was banned for life following allegations that he offered to influence the Champions League game between Grasshopper Zurich and Auxerre last October. Rothlisberger is threatening legal action against Uefa over its findings.

RUGBY League will see a repeat of last year's Silk Cut Challenge Cup final, when Bradford meet St Helens on May 3 at Wembley. The Bulls chased off Leeds 24-10 in a highly physical semi-final at Huddersfield on Saturday. St Helens meanwhile recorded a Super League sensation by storming Central Park, Wigan's citadel, and ending their opponents' undefeated home run, which stretched back to 1994 and covered 55 games. It was the Saints' first victory there in a decade.

CHESS prodigy Luke McShane has become the youngest UK international master, breaking the age record held by Nigel Short and Matthew Sadler by more than a year. The 13-year-old secured the third and final result he needed at Gelsenkirchen, Germany.

Golf

Rich pickings for Elkington

David Davies at Ponte Vedra

STEVE ELKINGTON moved relentlessly away on the last round of the richest four-round tournament in the world here near Jacksonville on Sunday. Eventually the Australian, who had started the day with a two-stroke lead over Scott Hoch, won the $3.5 million Players Championship by seven shots from Hoch to take the first prize of $630,000. His final round of 69, for 272, put him 16 under.

Colin Montgomerie, representing the only European competitive interest, was tied for sixth playing the last but bogeyed it for a 73, a total of 284, to drop to seventh.

If Nick Faldo, tied for 37th at the start of the day, needed a stimulus to play well in the final round, it lay in the fact of the draw. The US Masters champion partnered Tiger Woods, and the early exchanges belonged to Faldo. He birdied the long 2nd and from his demeanour it seemed as if he was, in effect, saying talk to me when you've won six majors.

For the front nine it worked. Faldo was out in 32, Woods 36. But a pulled tee-shot at the short 13th finished in the water, costing him a double bogey, three putts at the 14th cost him another and that, said Faldo later, "killed the momentum". He came home in 40 for a 72, one shot better than his young rival.

Woods moves around the course these days as if in a presidential cavalcade. The galleries are so enormous he needs help to get from green to tee, and on Sunday there were eight guards allocated to him.

● American John Daly decided to enter the Betty Ford Alcohol Rehabilitation programme in Palm Springs following allegations of rowdy behaviour at a club after the first day's play. He failed to turn up for the second round of the Players Championship, saying he had an injured hip. But wags suggested his real problem lay in his hip flask.

Football results

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE First Division Crystal Pal 0 Birmingham 1; Oxford 2 QPR 3; Portsmth 3 Bradford 1; Sheff Utd 2 Reading 0; Stoke 2 Oldham 1; Swindon 0 Norwich 3.
Easter Monday: Birmingham 0 Charlton 0, Bradford C 1 Stoke 0; Grimsby 2 Ipswich 1; Huddersfield 2 Sheff Utd 1; Norwich 1 Oxford 1; Oldham 5 Swindon 1; Port Vale 2 Tranmere 1; QPR 2 Wolverhampton 2; Reading 1 Barnsley 2; Southend 2 Portsmth 1; West Brom P v C Palace P. **Leading positions:** 1, Bolton (played 40-points 84); 2, Barnsley (39-70); 3, Wolves (40-66).

Second Division Brentford 0 Bury 2; Bristol City 0 Gillingham 1; Burnley 0 Luton 2; Chesterfld 0 Blackpool 0; Peterboro 1 Bristol Rvrs 2; Preston 2 Notts Co 0; Rotherham 1 Walsall 2; Stockport 1 Crewe 0; Watford 0 Bournemth 1; Wycombe 3 Shrewsbry 0; York 1 Plymouth 1.
Easter Monday: Blackpool 4 Rotherham 1; Bristol Rvrs 2 Wrexham 0; Bury 2 Wycombe 0; Crewe 1 Preston 0; Gillingham 1 Brentford 2; Notts Co 0 Peterborough 0; Plymouth 0 Watford 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Bury (38-70); 2, Brentford (39-67); 3, Luton (37-64).

Third Division Barnet 2 Cambridge 1; Carlisle 0 Doncaster 0; Chester 2 Brighton 1; Darlington 1 Hull 0; Exeter 0 Mansfield 0; Hartlepool 1 Colchester 0; Hereford 0 Fulham 0; Lincoln 1 Torquay 2; Northmptn 0 Wigan 1; Rochdale 2 Swansea 3; Sc'thorpe 1 Leyton O 2.
Easter Monday: Cambridge Utd 1 Lincoln 3; Colchester 0 Darlington 3; Doncaster 1 Exeter 2; Fulham 1 Rochdale 1; Hull 1 Hereford 1; Leyton Orient 2 Carlisle 1; Mansfield 1 Hartlepool 0; Scarborough 3 Sc'thorpe 2; Swansea 2 Chester 1; Torquay 1 Northmptn 2; Wigan 0 Cardiff 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Wigan (41-77); 2, Carlisle (40-77); 3, Fulham (40-76).

SCOTTISH LEAGUE Second Division Livingston 1 Hamilton 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Ayr (30-66); 2, Hamilton (30-60). 3, Livingston (30-64).